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BOOM STUDIOS
ADVENTURE TIME

BCM #2 Introduction by Rich Johnston

The zero issue was early. The first issue was late. This issue is on time. I think that's probably my favoured version.

"Comics Aren't Just For Kids." That's what the newspaper headlines have read for the last forty years. But increasingly it seems, "Comics Aren't For Kids At All, Anymore." But over the last few years, there seems to have been a bit of a revival in that area. BOOM! and Archaia found Jim Henson licences in *Muppets* and *Fraggle Rock*, and now BOOM! has hit gold with the Pendleton Ward titles such as *Adventure Time* and *Bravest Warriors*. Ape has found success with their Dreamworks titles and *Strawberry Shortcake* and *Kung Fu Panda*. Archie Comics is having a boom on the back of conservative media-baiting content. And IDW has beaten them all with *My Little Pony*. All while, the Big Two have been faltering in providing decent all-ages material.

One thing these have in common is a multi-media license, but this is not exclusively so. Archaia's *Mouse Guard*, Th3rd Studios' *Stuff of Legend*, Top Shelf's *Owly*, and Image's *Super Dinosaur* all show there are other possibilities out there.

Of course, there's more scope outside of the USA. Brazil's *Monica's Gang* has been running for decades and even saw one issue hit half a million copies sold, with the two main characters

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kissing on the cover. Beat that, Superman and Wonder Woman. France's *Asterix* still sells millions with every volume, accompanied by a large, varied all-ages market. And while restricted on the sales front, Britain's *Phoenix* comic is a weekly anthology sold exclusively in comic stores, subscription, or the British middle class' favourite superstore, Waitrose, giving it a very different model indeed. Sadly, this has been accompanied by the fall of the *Dandy*, cancelled after 75 years, going "digital only."

With tablets and devices getting cheaper and easier to use, digital, as with many things, could be the future entry point for all-ages comics...

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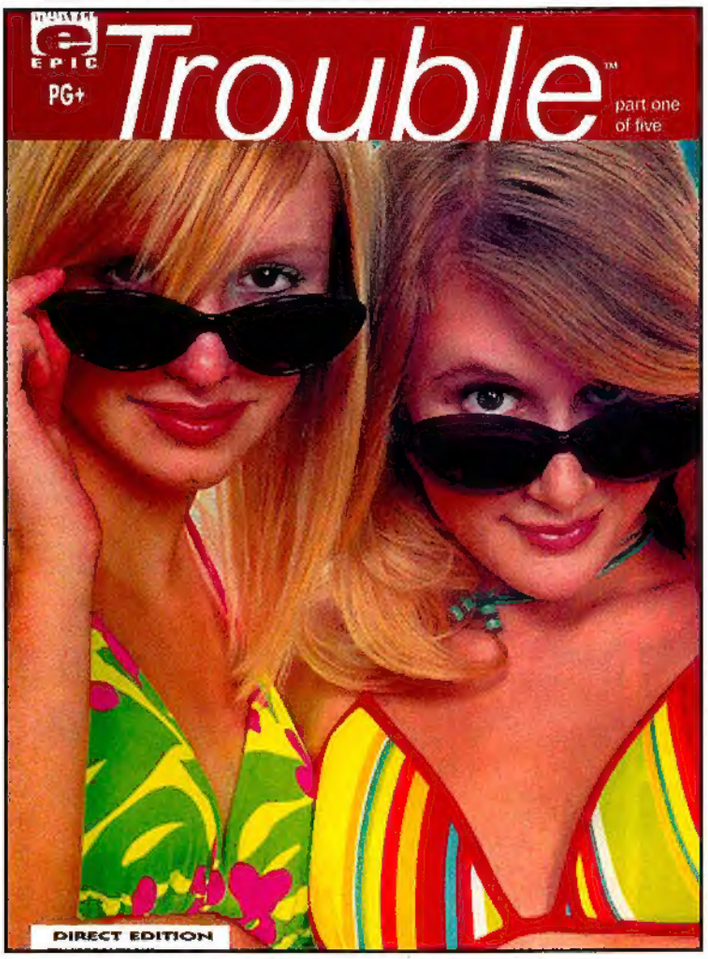
LIFE IN THE GUTTERS
By Rich Johnston



I often run blind items, usually to protect me from legal action. With Bill Jemas however, there's no problem, there is nothing you can say about him that he wouldn't clutch to his bosom with joy.

Bill Jemas has returned to the comics industry, with his new comic *Wake The F*ck Up* (and instantly, apologies to anyone who bought this magazine for our kids comics coverage and were confronted with this straight away.)

Bill Jemas was a sports executive who was appointed as President by the Marvel board after the company went bankrupt in the late nineties. His job, as he saw it, was to pull the publisher out of financial wreckage and see it succeed by any means necessary.

And what means those were; trying to attract TV and movie writers to Marvel, trying to make comic books more appealing to the general audience by making them look more like entertainment magazines, starting the Ultimate line, telling stories like Wolverine's origin, removing all lettering for a month, then bringing it back in lower case, getting bloggers to write comics... he threw everything at the wall to see what would stick.

After his editor-in-chief appointee Joe Quesada attended a Comics Code meeting and was infuriated by the limited scope of that body in promoting comics, Bill Jemas suddenly decided to pull Marvel out of the Comics Code.

DC Publisher and President Paul Levitz called an emergency meeting and asked Bill to attend. On discovering that Levitz was bringing a number of DC executives with him as well as representatives from the other Coded company, Archie Comics, Bill Jemas decided to turn up with his own posse – made up of every recently ex-DC and ex-Archie employee who had moved to Marvel, for no other reason than to stick his thumb up at his competitors.

The Code's Michael Silberkleit pulled out one of those oversized leather portfolios with yellowed newspaper clippings from the 1950s reporting on the Fredrick Wertham hearings and how the comic's industry bent over and sold Bill Gaines up the river, in order to stay alive. Silberkleit pointed at yellowing, crumbling article after article saying, "This is what can happen if we don't have the code." It's at that point, Paul turned to Bill in a very condescending way and said, "You see Bill, we need to be afraid of the Senators." Bill calmly turned to Paul and said...

"Personally Paul, I'm more afraid of Sentinels than I am Senators."

Paul folded his arms across his chest and slumped down in his chair and never said another word. The meeting was over.

DC's Paul Levitz appealed to Marvel's board to have Bill Jemas fired. They wouldn't. But after a series of public attacks on DC, culminating in Joe Quesada's comparison of DC Comics to a porn star who couldn't get an erection, DC committed to never working with Marvel on a crossover project while Levitz and Quesada were still employed by the company.

Making an open offer for Marvel to publish the unpublished *Authority* comics by Brian Azzarello and Steve Dillon the publisher had buried probably didn't help either.

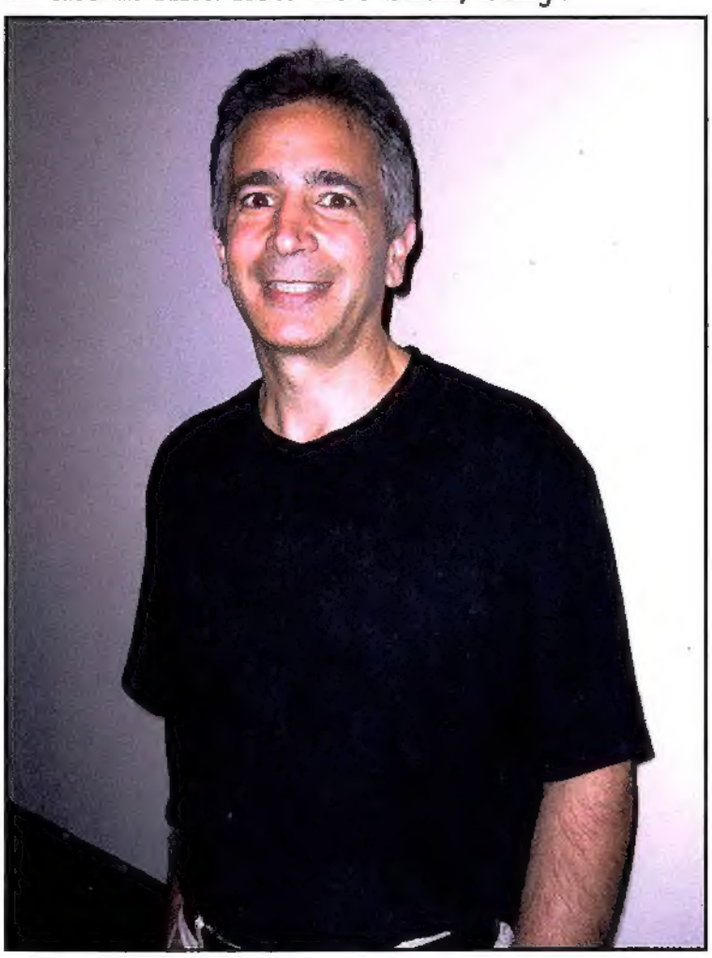
Bill Jemas desire to reach out to new audience culminated in *Trouble*, a comic book that was basically about a young Aunt May getting knocked up, by an all star team of Mark Millar and Terry Dodson. And the covers featured photographs of young teenagers in bikinis. Which were photographed in Marvel's offices, to the discomfort of many, some who compared it to a child porn shoot.

Bill Jemas used to hate writers who started a story in the middle of the action, citing *Star Wars* as an example of a story that started slow, with two robots in a desert, before building. Until it was pointed out to him that *Star Wars* actually begins with a big space battle. He stopped using that example.

Bill Jemas left Marvel when he felt he could do all he could and it wasn't as fun for him any more. He left with a very large sum of money from cashing in his shares, if not the nine-figure sum reported at the time. He tried publishing his own comics, moved over to painting peace signs on naked women's bodies, and is now pursuing a transmedia publishing.

However, he did meet up with his old nemesis recently at New York Comic Con last year, at a private dinner being held the night before the show was over – which was also the first time I met him, face to face. But before I'd arrived, he's approached Paul Levitz, now a freelance writer, and held out his hand saying that, after all these years, how good it was to see him. Paul frostily placed his fingers together and, with the most carefully composed poker face, replied, "I wish I could say the same, Bill."

There are a million tales in the naked city about Bill Jemas. These are just a few of them. And now he's back, baby!



Got a tip for Rich? You can contact him, or any Bleeding Cool contributor, with story tips, comments, questions, or to ask about advertising at: ***BleedingCool.com/contact***

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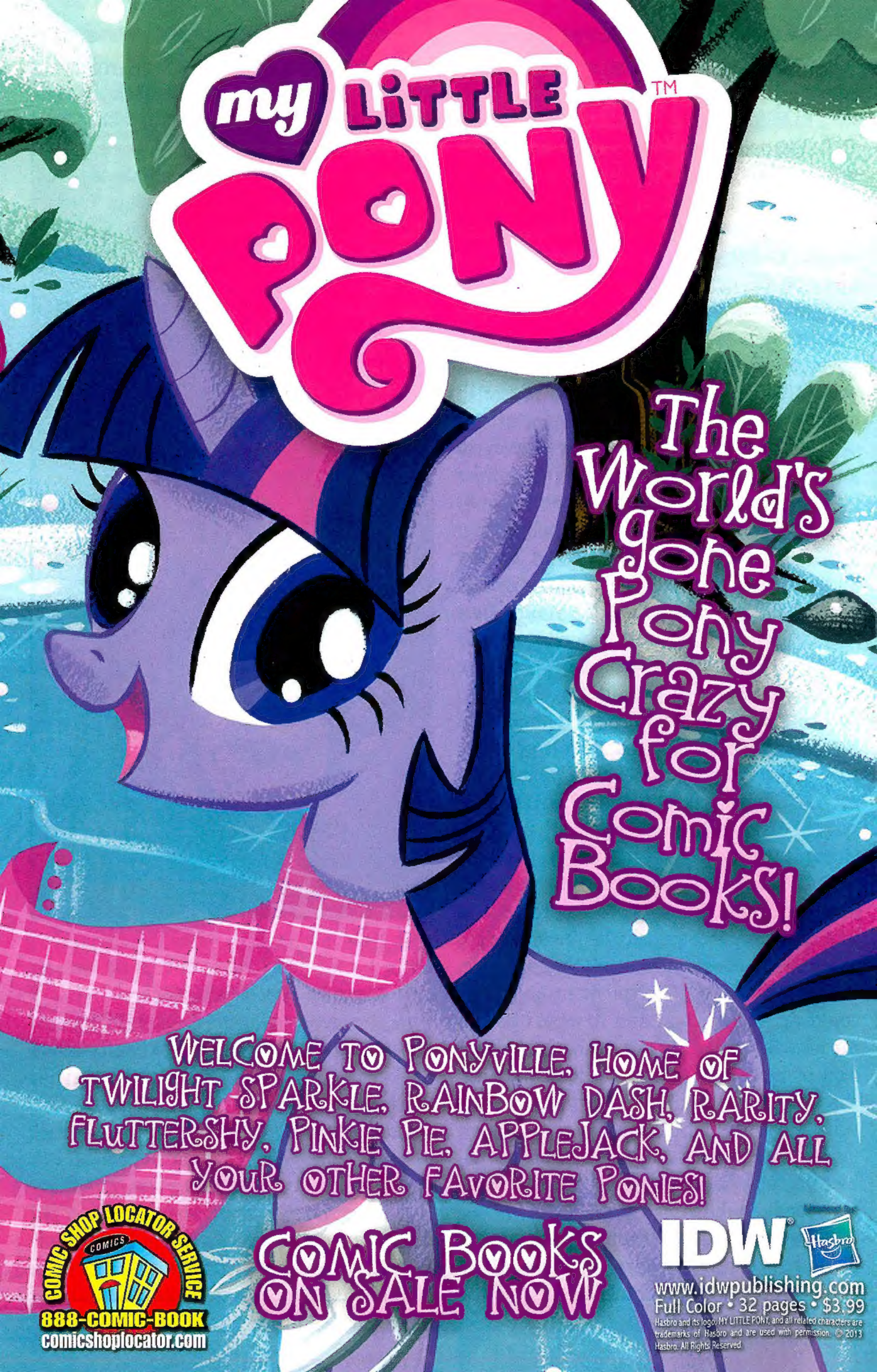
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Shell Shocked

Turtle Power Still Kicking ***By Gavin Lees***

SHELL SHOCKED:
TURTLE POWER STILL KICKING
by Gavin Lees

The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles have been a phenomenally successful franchise for nearly 30 years. A true multi-media property, the characters have appeared in comics, animated shows, motion pictures, action figures, on t-shirts, lunchboxes, skateboards and anything else to which you can slap on a logo. Their creators, Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird, became overnight sensations and went on to become among the most financially successful comics artists of their time, while also struggling with how their characters had expanded beyond their control.

With IDW about to release a new TMNT miniseries, and talk of an impending Michael Bay movie reboot, Gavin Lees takes a look at the storied history of the half-shelled heroes and where the franchise may be headed in the near future.

Origin

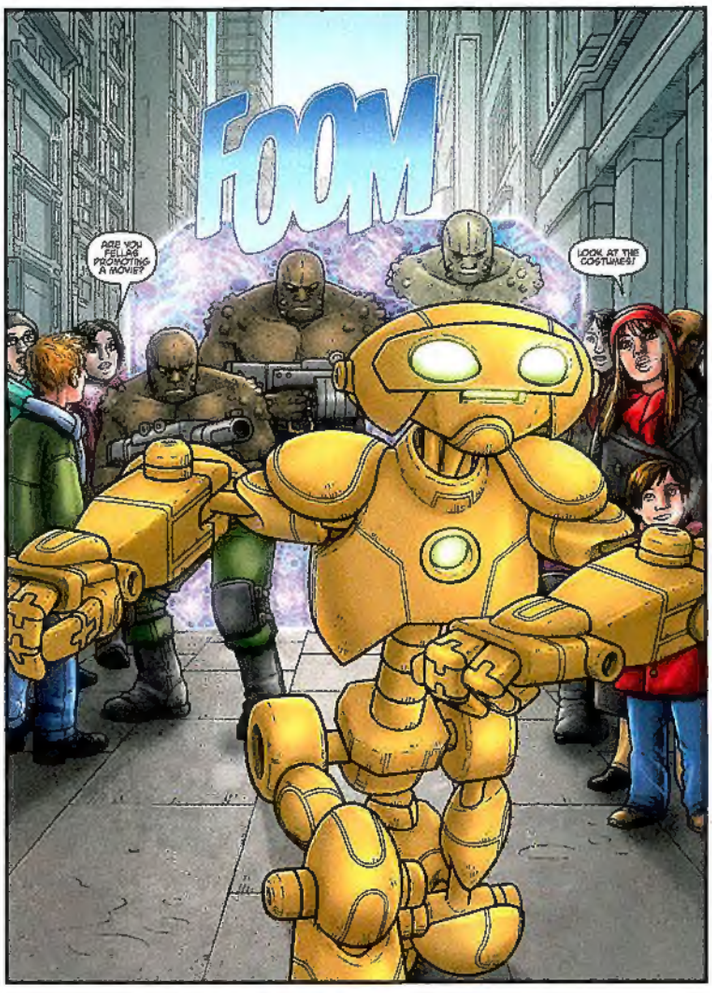
It really began with lobsters. After graduating high school, Kevin Eastman enrolled in the Portland School of Art, aspiring to work in comics, following in the footsteps of his favourite artists: Jack Kirby and Richard Corben. Work being plentiful during the tourist season in Maine, he would spend his summers cooking lobsters. It was while working on the coast that he discovered underground comics on local magazine racks and found an outlet for his comics work by contacting artists like Clay Geerdes and Denis Kitchen. It was also through cooking lobsters that he met a young waitress from Northampton, Massachusetts, whom he followed to her hometown after quitting art school in 1983. It was there he was introduced to Peter Laird, another artist as equally infatuated with Kirby as he was, and the two began a productive, if unsuccessful, partnership creating comic stories to sell to anthologies, with an eye on breaking into DC or Marvel.

While working on a boilerplate robot story called "The Fugitoid," Eastman scribbled a picture to entertain Laird. It was a turtle standing upright, with a mask over his face and nunchucks strapped to his arms. It worked: Laird thought it was hilarious and drew a second, changing and fixing some details. Eastman felt the need to better it, and so drew four of the characters, standing with different weapons. Above them, he wrote "Ninja Turtles," to which Laird jokingly added "Teenage Mutant." The idea grew legs, though, and a few months later — March of 1984 — in-between sporadic paying illustration jobs, they had completed 40 pages of an origin story of how these turtles came to be, liberally appropriating details from *Daredevil* and samurai movies along the way.

Borrowing money from Eastman's Uncle Quentin, the pair were able to print 3,000 copies of the comic on newsprint, and spring

for a small advertisement in the *Comic Buyer's Guide*. From that one ad, the comic caught the attention of several distributors and the first printing sold-out within two weeks. With orders still coming in, a second print of 6,000 was made, which also sold out. Seeing the potential in this new self-published endeavor, Eastman and Laird moved to Connecticut and set-up a studio in a rented apartment where they produced the early issues of *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. The second issue sold 15,000 copies upon its first printing; the third around 50,000.

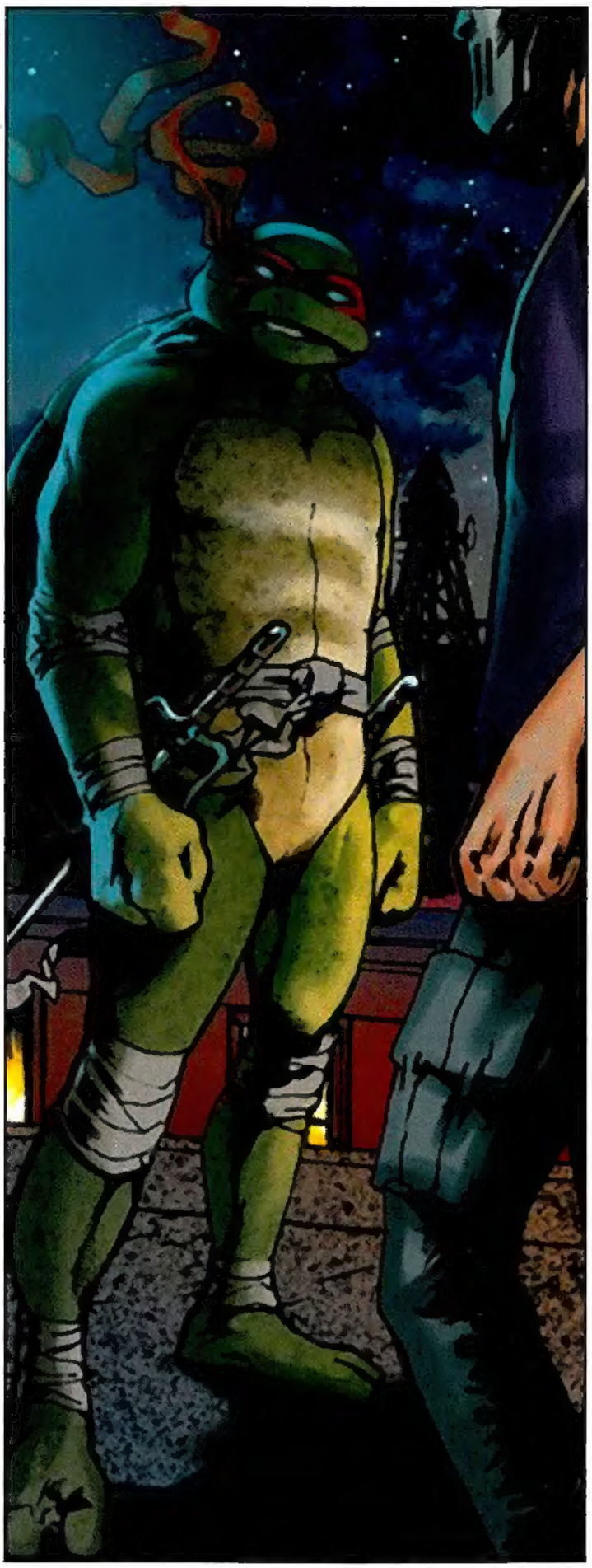
Why the Turtles caught-on as they did remains a mystery. It could have been a fluke: an easy joke on the excesses of sci-fi monster tropes that comic fans could relate to; or perhaps it was the manic energy of those early issues as Eastman and Laird haphazardly shared art duties on every page, each always trying to out-do the other. Whatever the reason, they quickly became a phenomenon and began to change the landscape of comics publishing in the 1980s.



Transformation

The concept of the series was simple: four pet turtles are knocked into the sewer by a stray canister that falls from a truck. The canister contains radioactive "ooze" that mutates them to human size. Also touched by the ooze is Splinter, the pet rat of a slain ninja master. He names the transformed turtles after Renaissance artists — Leonardo, Michelangelo, Donatello and Raphael — and trains them in martial arts in order to avenge his master's death by killing his murderer, a ninja master known as The Shredder.

The initial issues of the series were heavily influenced by Frank Miller's work, particularly *Ronin*, in its blend of martial arts and Japanese culture with modern action-violence and science-fiction. Even the linework and the posing of the characters carried that distinctive Miller edge, without fully reaching the slickness or sophistication of his work. Eastman and Laird's work was more rubbery, never quite seeming assured of the seriousness with which they were



treating their admittedly-goofy material.

The success of those early issues made *TMNT* a prime example of the potential of self-publishing, and soon Eastman and Laird were being celebrated by fellow self-publishers and creators'-rights champions such as Steve Bissette, W. Michael Kaluta and Dave Sim. Sim collaborated with the duo on a time-travelling episode of the Turtles in issue eight, which saw the Turtles team-up with his character, Cerebus. That issue would go on to sell 135,000 copies — numbers that even Marvel and DC would be happy with today.

Understandably, it was not long before Eastman and Laird found themselves doing lunch with agents promising to make them millionaires. Being content with the relative comfort they were living in, the pair would dismiss these offers by calling the fluffmeisters' bluffs and giving them 30 days to find interest. It wasn't until they received an offer back from Playmates toys they realized things were beginning to become serious. One trip to California later, and they were agreeing to a five-episode pilot cartoon series and a three-year contract on *TMNT* action figures.

Of course, compromises had to be made, as the cartoons and action figures were aimed at four- to eight-year olds — hardly the target demographic for violent, foul-mouthed, beer-swilling monsters, with a tenuous moral code. Working with Fred Wolf, the lead animator on the project, Eastman and Laird worked out ways to soften the characters, while still remaining as faithful as possible to their vision. While before, the characters were only distinguishable by their weapons, Laird came up with a scheme of coloured bandanas and initials on their belt-buckles, making them altogether more child-friendly. Laird was never fully happy with the changes, however, and regretted losing the purity of his co-creation. Eastman was more philosophical, and never had as great an attachment to the characters — always convinced that he would go on to do more mature, personal projects, inspired by *Heavy Metal* — never once thinking that they would capture the popular imagination quite as much as they did.

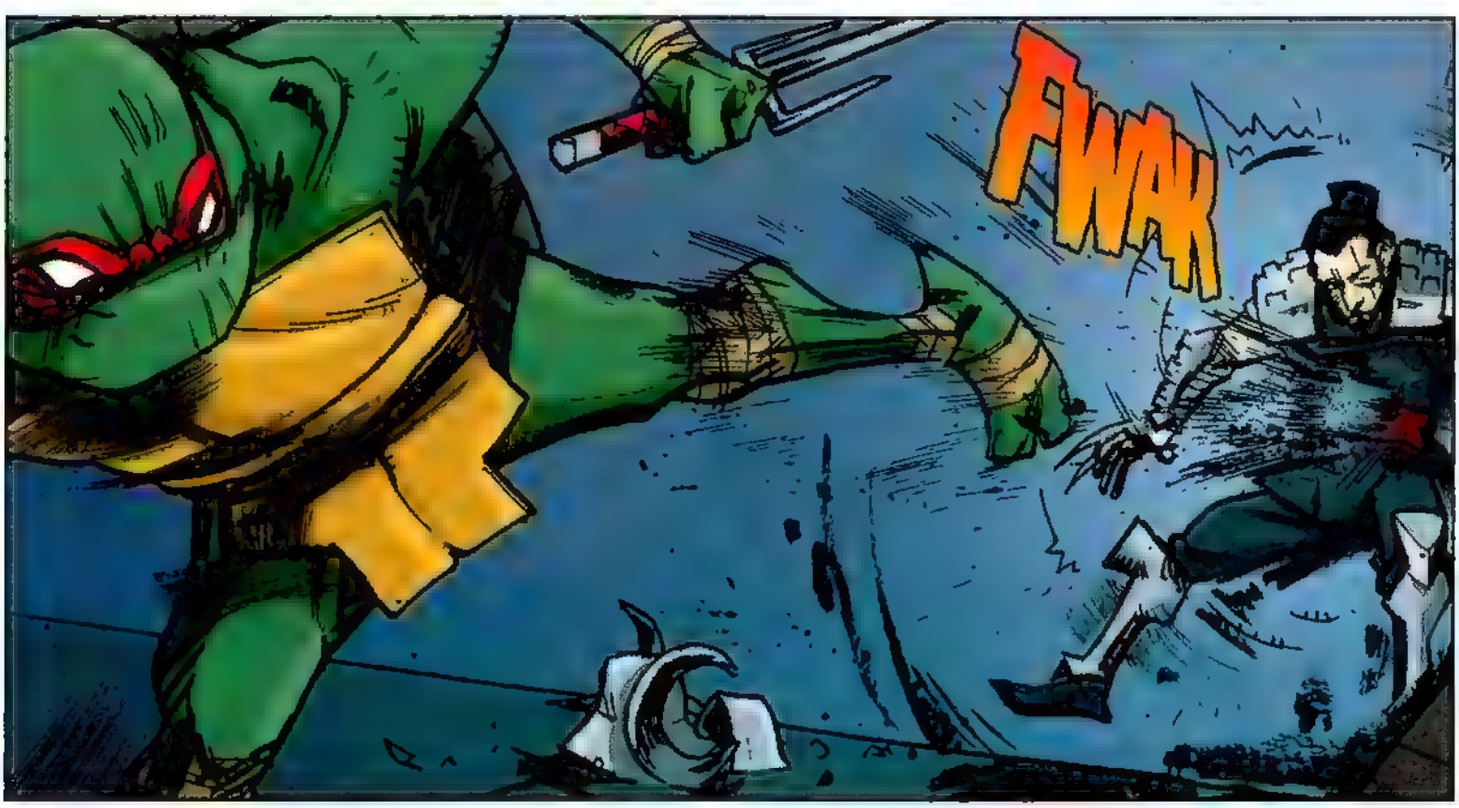
Explosion

The *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* cartoon was broadcast in the USA over Christmas of 1987, going straight to number one in the ratings. Eastman and Laird immediately went back to work on further episodes of the cartoon, which were released in the summer of 1988, coinciding with the release of the Turtles action figures — which were so popular that people were literally fighting in the aisles of Toys 'R' Us to get their hands on them. Lightning had struck twice, and the Turtles had achieved a whole new level of success, but Eastman and Laird's creation had run away from them.

While the duo always had final say in the changes that were made for the cartoon, and in the marketing decisions that were made, these were often made lightly as the comics were their real passion. The irony was, as their creation became more popular, they began to have less time to devote to the comics and, around the fifteenth issue, the drawing stopped altogether.

It was around this point that Mirage — the studio Eastman and Laird had set-up in their Northampton apartment — began to expand and the duo hired young artists to draw and write Turtles comics to showcase their work, and then publish their own, personal projects through Mirage. As a result, the demand and speculation over black-and-white indie comics began to bubble. Series like Michael Dooney's *Gizmo* would sell over 100,000 copies of their first issue, petering out to just over 3,000 by issue six. Mirage became a victim of its own success and, having flooded the market with these projects (not to mention inspiring a few dozen adjective-adjective-adjective-noun copycat titles — *Pre-Teen Dirty-Gene Kung Fu Kangaroos* being but one egregious example) the demand for any non-Turtle title collapsed.

The Ninja Turtle steamroller pressed-on unabated, however, and this period of boom and bust became one of the most creatively-rich times for the title. Thanks to the credibility Mirage had built as a creator-owned operation, several high-profile creators stepped-in to fill Eastman and Laird's places on the comic: Rick Veitch, Matt Howarth, Richard Corben and, in some particularly memorable issues, Michael Zulli. Zulli's Turtles and Splinter were modeled on real animals, bringing them down into the uncanny valley and making for a truly bizarre experience.



Revision

Not every creator was happy with what Mirage was doing, though. Some who had championed their self-publishing ethic went on to become their biggest critics, horrified they would begin to farm out the Turtles as work-for-hire. Unsurprisingly, Dave Sim was among this group of critics, and eventually refused to let his issue eight story be reprinted; and Bissette waxed lyrical about the corrupting influence of money on the publishers: "As business interests insinuated themselves into Mirage, they began to seize more and more control of the company. Those business interests were given more and more control by Peter and Kevin. Meanwhile, the guys who were actually doing the nuts and bolts work were being pushed further and further to the periphery. This started crippling the friendship between all these people. ... The genuine ethics and issues became lost amid the chaotic, ever-expanding business demands."

Nowhere was that struggle between art and commerce more distinct than in the series of three mediocre-at-best motion pictures that began in 1990. Although this period in the Turtles' history was netting their creators around $50 million per year, it had eroded many relationships, created a never-ending stream of legal battles, and burned-out Eastman and Laird on drawing altogether. Something had to give.

Abandoning their creation to the media and merchandising machine, Mirage tried to reinvigorate the Turtles for the comics market with a second volume of *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, this time in full-colour with art and writing from Jim Lawson (who would go on to become the de facto and defining artist of the Turtles comics). This freed Laird to return to working on his own

material, such as *Stupid Heroes and Planet Racers*, as well as to establish the Xeric grant for self-published cartoonists (the list of recipients of which reads like a who's who of independent cartoonists — Megan Kelso, Jordan Crane, Gene Yang, to name but three). Eastman, meanwhile, devoted his time, money and energy to running a new publishing endeavour: Tundra. The rollercoaster of fortune and unending saga of this venture could fill an entire book, but needless to say, after several commercial failures, undelivered projects (the most famous of which is probably Alan Moore and Bill Sienkiewicz's *Big Numbers*) and further lawsuits, the publisher folded and its assets were acquired by Kitchen Sink Publishing in 1993.

The Turtles comics found new life through Image with a third volume in 1996, but Laird's dissatisfaction with the material led him to begin a fourth volume through Mirage Studios once again. This was an attempt to rein-in the characters, away from their child-friendly image and back to their roots as an aggressive, mature property.

The return to their origins was also reflected in a new cartoon series produced by 4Kids. This latest animated incarnation of the Turtles was a move back to an edgier tone. It was, in a way, the completion of a cycle, as the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* comic had inspired so many animators to branch out into more aggressive and stylized territory — Genndy Tartakovsky's *Samurai Jack* being the most obvious example. The success of those more grown-up cartoons opened up new audiences that were more receptive to darker, subversive material, finally allowing for a faithful adaptation of the Turtles to reach the screen. The series culminated in a feature-length episode that saw the modern Turtles meet their 1980s cartoon counterparts, and label them "sell-outs." One can't help but wonder if that remark was really pointed at someone else.

Revival

2011 saw the Turtles return to comics, this time at IDW. The situation was entirely different from any previous incarnation, however — Laird had sold off the rights to the property to Nickelodeon in 2009, so these were the first comics produced without any creative control from their creators. IDW did score a boon by persuading Eastman to return as a writer and layout artist on the series. The title's editor, Bobby Curnow, had his doubts about this situation: "I thought for sure that he would perhaps be protective of his baby, and there could very well be friction. Here's the twist though... Kevin, in my personal opinion, is the perfect collaborator. He brings great ideas to the table, keeps us true to TMNT lore, but beyond that he is our number one supporter and fan. On our end, we fully realize that we are forever in debt to Kevin and Peter Laird. We're playing with their creations, it all comes from them."

In addition to the primary, ongoing series (with co-writer Tom Waltz and artist Dan Duncan), there have been a number of ancillary mini-series that tie into the main storyline. This was an intentional move to ape the successful formula of the original Mirage comics. The next installment of these were released in December by Mateus Santolouco, focusing on Shredder and the origin of the Foot Clan (the league of ninjas who serve as the main antagonist to the Turtles). Curnow's plan is to continue this formula. "As long as fans are enjoying the books, and there's interesting stories to explore, we'll continue to do supplementary titles. That's what's great about this property. It's so dang rich. It's never a chore to try and find new stories. Instead the stories beat down our door and jump in."

The main storyline is about to see some major changes, as Duncan leaves art duties to be replaced by Andy Kuhn and Ben Bates, who each bring new stylings to the book. "I like to think we've got one foot in the mainstream capes comics world, and one foot remaining in the indy DIY comics that the Turtles originally came from," says Curnow. "What's truly remarkable is that I don't think this has been 'just a job' for any of the artists we've worked with. People love the Turtles, they're truly unique, and as a result, artists really bring their A-game. And have a lot of fun in the process. I think that shows on the page."

As for how any impending movie may affect the franchise, Curnow remains resolute: "The Turtles were born in this medium, and this is where they will always thrive. In many ways, *TMNT* is a big, ninja-fueled soap opera. These characters grow and change over time, and they get into incredible, crazy, surprising adventures. Comics offer a unique way of telling those stories. In short, Turtles stories work well as comics, and there's obviously a strong demand for those types of stories. We aim to continue telling them for as long as possible!"

ADVENTURE TIME MEETS BRAVEST WARRIORS, SORTA

Writers Ryan North and Joey Comeau Discuss the KaBOOM! Series

ADVENTURE TIME MEETS BRAVEST WARRIORS, SORTA

Ryan North and Joey Comeau

Adventure Time and *Bravest Warriors*, two cartoon series with a tremendous cult following, won't be crossing over anytime soon. However, the two writers for the KaBOOM! comic series, Ryan North and Joey Comeau, recently got together to discuss what it is like to bring these characters new adventures in comic form.

Ryan North is the Toronto-based creator of *Dinosaur Comics*, co-editor of *Machine of Death*, and writer of the *Adventure Time* comic series. He is also the creator of Project Wonderful, an auction-based ad-serving system. Meanwhile, Joey Comeau is a Canadian web comic writer and novelist. He's best known for his web comic *A Softer World* with photographer Emily Horne, and his novel *Overqualified*. *A Softer World* won the first Web Cartoonists' Choice Award for photographic web comic in 2007. Comeau is also the writer of the *Bravest Warriors* comic series.

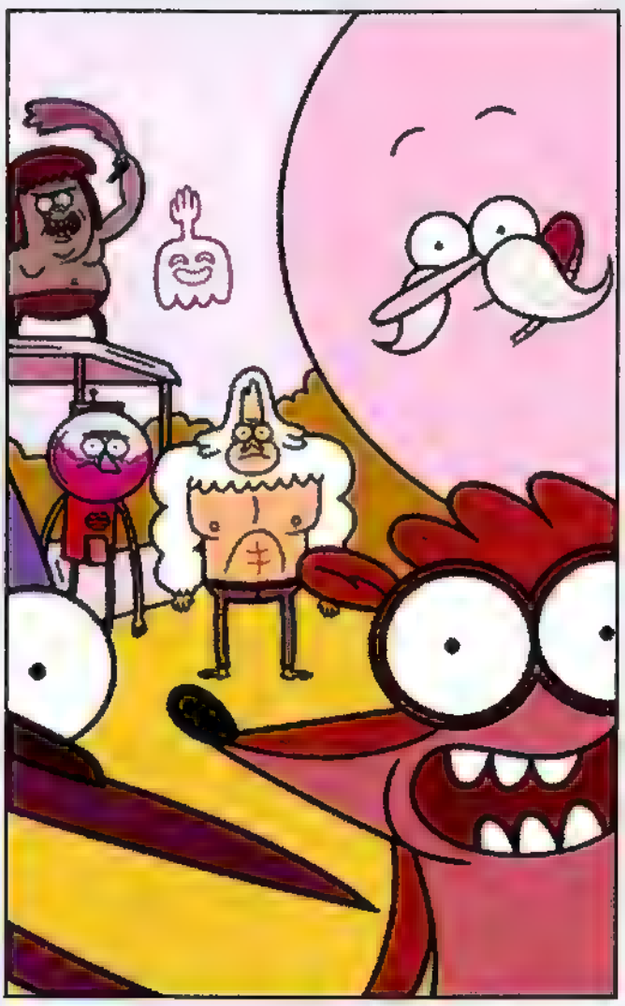
The two writers share a number of things in common – they both began their careers in the web comic community, they are both writing all-ages series for KaBOOM! Studios created by Pendleton Ward, and they happen to have been very close friends for ten years. What follows is a conversation between two friends filled with the trademark humor and whimsy that is the hallmark of their work.

RYAN NORTH: Joey, you and I have been friends for a decade, but now we're writing comics that take place in two different cartoon universes. Will this affect our friendship?

JOEY COMEAU: Despite the fact that the corporate entities that own the intellectual property rights to *Adventure Time* and *Bravest Warriors* have instructed us to refrain from connecting the universes in any way, because it might weaken the distinctions between their brands, I think the power of our friendship is stronger than the money-hunger of some Hollywood fat cats, or the Wall Street financiers who own most of the *Adventure Time* stock.

Our friendship is so strong, in fact, that we can hide secret messages for one another in our respective comics, and these will function as wormholes between the universes! Friendholes! Doesn't that sound pleasant and not creepy? Anyway, that's what I've been doing all along. Shh.

After the success of *Adventure Time* and *Bravest Warriors*, KaBOOM! is turning once again to Cartoon Network and a new set of adventuring friends in the upcoming series *Regular Show*, debuting in April. But who are these odd friends and what is all the "whooaaa!"-ing about?



J.G. Quintel is the creator of the Emmy award-winning series about two friends who are employed as groundskeepers at a park. Buuut... their relationship and adventures are anything but "regular" as these two best friends manage to turn their laziness into supernatural adventures on a weekly basis. It's the kind of show that reminds you of high school when you and your best friend would come up with insane ideas and motifs for the friends you have all around you.

It's like that... but funnier.

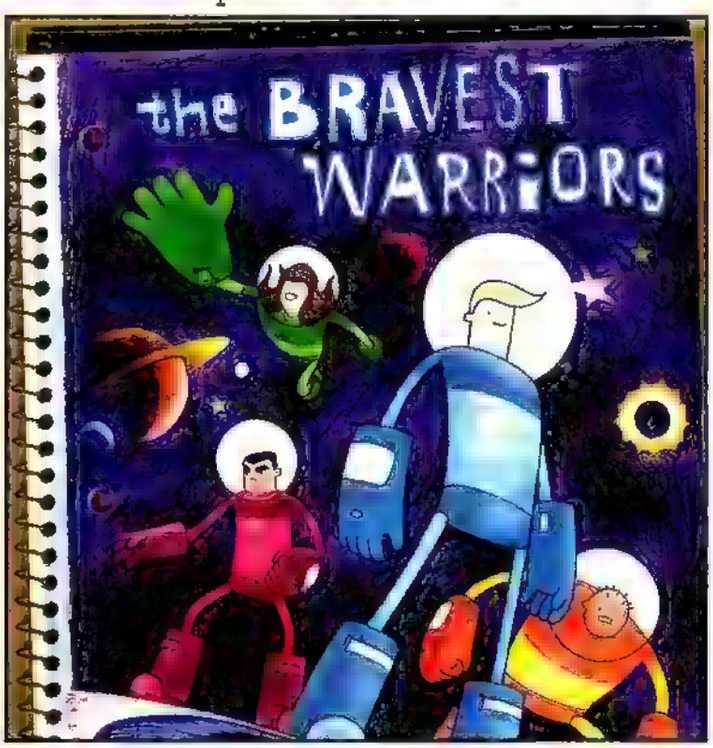
Okay, phew. Now that that's out of the way, we both started doing webcomics that we put online for free (me writing *Dinosaur Comics*, you writing *A Softer World*), and now people have to pay to read *Bravest Warriors* and *Adventure Time*. What are you putting into *Bravest Warriors* that makes it so much better than what they can get for free?

That's a terrible way to think about things, Ryan! I prefer to ask this question: If people don't buy our comics, what do they think will happen to their beloved characters in the next issue? Because let me tell you right now: I will kill them. And I will keep killing them until either I am rich, or I get fired.

You've been writing *Adventure Time* for a long time. So I have a two-part question! One - What's Marceline really like? And two - Can you put in a good word for me? For kisses?

The fact that you want to kiss a fictional character leads me nicely into my question, which is how you approach writing *Bravest Warriors*. For *Adventure Time*, I sort of follow the flow of conversation between the characters and let that dictate where the story goes - but when it's time to fight, I try

to make the fights as awesome as possible and feature something I haven't seen done before on the show, so the fight is hopefully both rad and original. And if there's a lot of talking, I try to make something cool happen in the background - this shows up in issue three, when everyone's trapped inside the bag. While they discuss their predicament, Lumpy Space Princess and Marceline and Ice King are there in the background, jumping through a portal to fight the Lich and coming back unsuccessful and a little beat up. So my question is this: How do you know when a comics page is "done," and can you put in a good word for me with Wallow? For friendships?



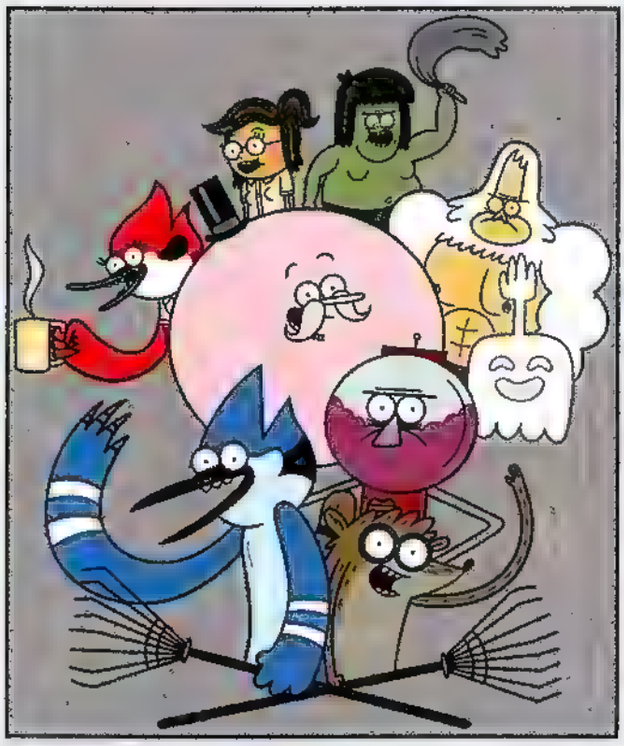
I'm not sure I have the specifications worked out exactly for what I think makes a page done. I just try to keep things funny and not boring. That is a pretty boring answer, but it is basically my writing philosophy in general. Think of something awesome, and try not to make it boring or stupid.

As for wanting to kiss fictional characters, I think maybe you should think twice before throwing any stones, my friend. I don't want to give away any of your secrets here, so I will just say this: Velma Body Pillow.

Mordecai & Rigby are a blue jay and a raccoon, and the bestest of buds. They're a more likeable Beavis and Butthead with a much wider range of conversation topics. Usually their adventures are based around finding ways to slack off at work and play video games. The pair is easy to relate to and show a range of emotion that is surprising at times. But their friendship and hazing rituals are amusing and usually end up causing the strangest misadventures.

Benson is a living gumball machine and the manager of the park where Mordecai and Rigby "work." To some extent, he's the prototypical boss, always angry about his employees not working hard enough. But beneath his boiling rage and sarcasm there is a soul that takes care of his own. He looks out for the benefit of his employees and friends between yelling "get back to work!"

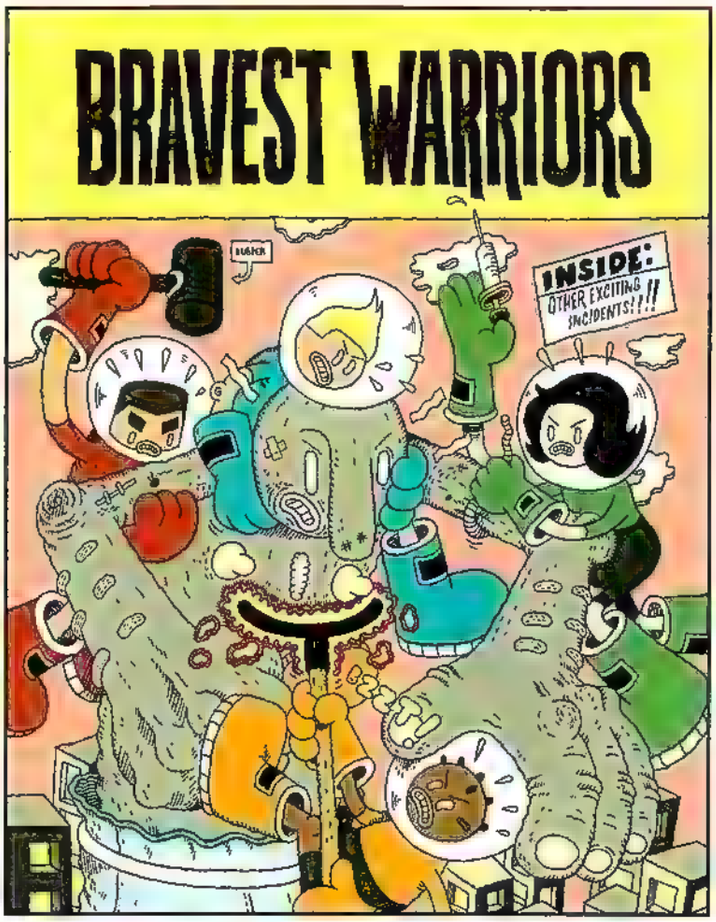
Skips is an immortal yeti groundskeeper that has built up knowledge of the unusual over his long life. With a knack for finding unique ways out of the trouble Mordecai & Rigby get into, he manages to fix virtually everything that breaks around him. Voiced by Mark Hamill, Skips is one part MacGyver and one part Jedi Master.



Muscleman & High Five Ghost are the other buddy pair at the park. Muscleman is an obese green man who is quick to crack his running catchphrase "my mom!" and is a master prankster. High Five Ghost is his wing man and always has his partner's back. The pair are respected at the park for getting their work done while Mordecai and Rigby usually find a way to mess up their tasks.

Pops is a giant headed elderly gentleman that appears to have never grown up. He has a naïve personality and is always jubilantly excitable about the things happening

Do you ever get the temptation to create villains that are modeled after people in your life who annoy you? Like the mean guy at the bank becomes the evil bank wizard or whatever? And then they are immortalized forever in an all-ages comic as the jerk they are?



RI think everyone has that temptation! My mother-in-law had held onto a drawing her son did when he was a just kid: she'd sent him to his room, and he'd returned two hours later with a piece of paper on which he'd drawn *Action Comics #1*, featuring Superman throwing his mom in jail. Adorable. And it shows how the best comics come from the heart, I guess?

Well, we're both writing all-ages comics, which to me is different than "for kids" - all ages really means all ages, including kids. So if I ever do write the mean guy at the bank in, I want to write something that the mean guy at the bank can read and read to or with his children, and they'll both enjoy it, and they'll both say how "evil bank wizard" is a jerk and then afterwards, late at night, as the mean bank guy is getting

ready for bed, he'll stare at his face in the mirror for a long while before shutting off the light. That sounds like a pretty good revenge.

Writing in real-life people is a pretty good secret thing to do – what other secrets are there in *Bravest Warriors*? I want to know all your secrets, Joey. Besides the one how you secretly write *Adventure Time* as well as *Bravest Warriors* and you just email me the scripts when they're done so I can take the credit for them because you are a good friend.

JI try and sneak in all sorts of stupid things! Doctor Who references, and secretly educating people about the history of the cupcake. All four of the *Bravest Warriors* are based on your personality. I am just hoping that nobody notices.

Both ***Adventure Time*** *and* ***Bravest Warriors*** *are currently available on a monthly basis in comic shops. North's* ***Dinosaur Comics*** *is available online at www.qwantz.com.* ***A Softer World*** *is available online at www.asofterworld.com.*

around him. His father owns the park, but it is Benson that takes care of Pops and makes sure that no harm befalls him. Pops pays for things with lollipop currency and wears a distinct top hat at all times.

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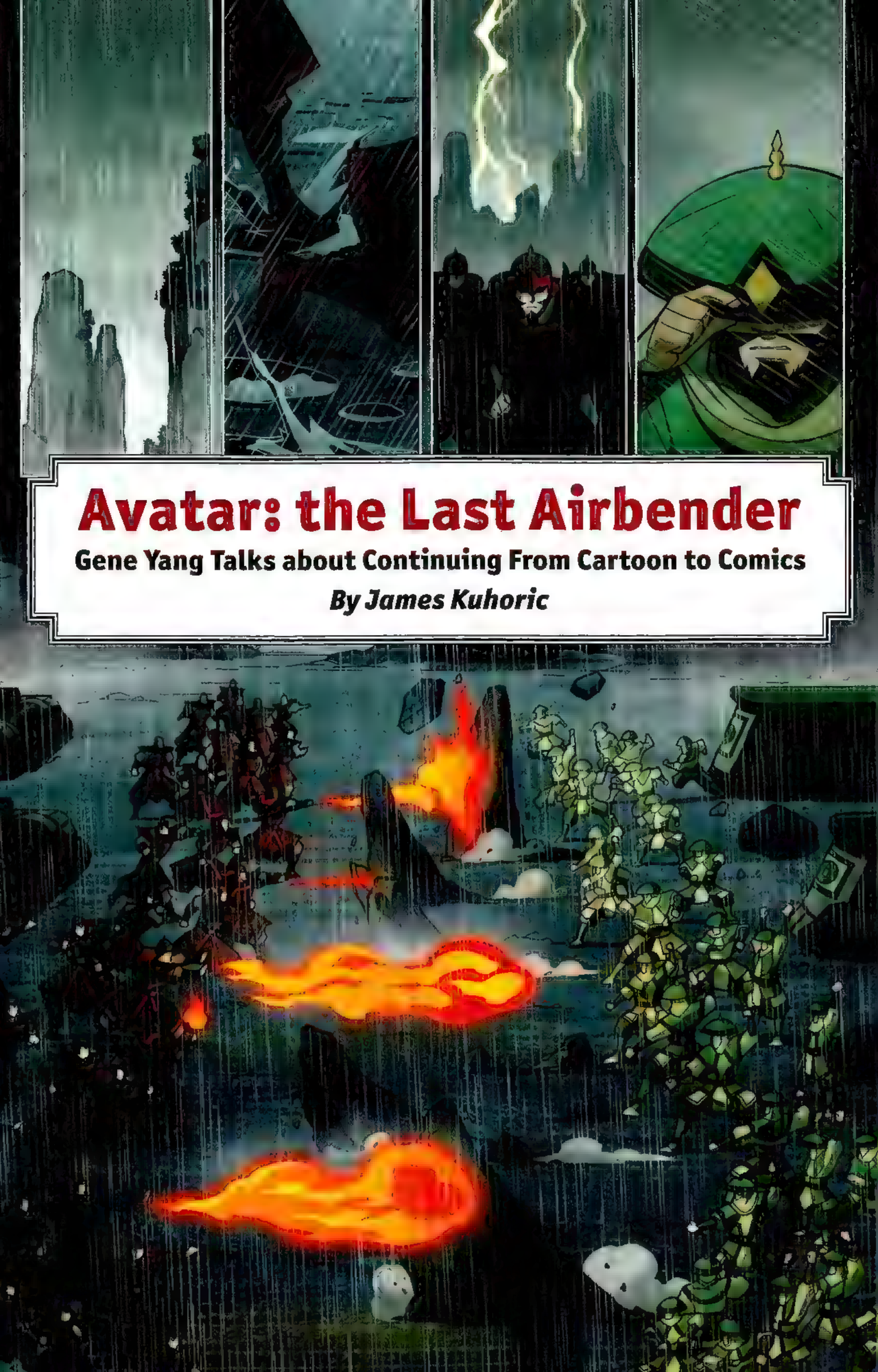
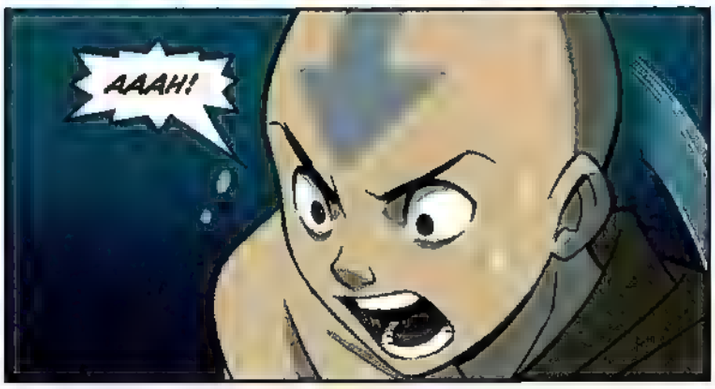


Avatar: the Last Airbender

Gene Yang Talks about Continuing From Cartoon to Comics

By James Kuhoric

AVATAR: THE LAST AIRBENDER
by James Kuhoric



Avatar the Last Airbender is one of those series that captivates an audience with substance as well as flash. Developed in 2005 by Michael DiMartino and Bryan Konietzko, the show is set in a mythological Asian-influenced world where the key characters possess the ability to manipulate the four elements by will through a supernatural talent called "bending." Fans of the series enjoyed a brilliant mix of animation and creativity that presented something wholly new and fresh. With fantastic writing and character development, Avatar became an instant hit with fans and a cosplaying sensation.

The series ran for three seasons and presented a complete story chronicling the life and rise of Aang and his battle against the evil Fire Lord Ozai. As beautifully done as the series was, it was a finite tale told from start to finish. Fans clamored for more of Aang, Katara, Sokka, and the conflicted Prince Zuko. Dark Horse rose to the occasion by starting a line of original Avatar graphic novels and answered the call of readers everywhere. But picking the right person to head up such an endeavor is serious business. They turned to Gene Yang, author of the award winning graphic novel American Born Chinese, to help make the transition from animation to comics. Bleeding Cool had the chance to talk with Yang about his role in bringing new adventures of this beloved series and what surprises he has in store for the future.

Writing a licensed comic is very hard. Fans want to read adventures that fit into their perception of the world they love and executives want something commercial that conforms to a set of sometimes very restrictive guidelines. How do you approach this in your writing for the series?

This [Avatar] is actually my first big story working with other people's characters. It is really different from working on my own stuff. But generally, I've had a very pleasant experience working with the teams from Avatar and Dark Horse. Every story starts with a conversation between me and the two guys [who] created the series – Mike DiMartino and Brian Konietzko. Because of that, I feel more comfortable stepping into the world and playing with the characters. Every draft I write gets sent to them and goes through editors at Dark Horse, at Nickelodeon, and with the legal team representing the series.

There have only been a few instances where all the creators liked something but it had to get tweaked at the legal level, sometimes due to perceived age appropriateness. For example, I had a story about a character that was scared of dying and he kept talking about "death" and his worry over getting killed. In the end, we changed it from fear of "death" to "doom" because of concern about the topic with kids. And, actually, that worked out far better than we originally had planned because "doom" is such a funny way to express the concerns. It actually ended up being one of my favorite sequences when it was all said and done.

ONE MOMENT, I KNOW, DEEP IN MY HEART, THAT I MUST DEFEND MY PEOPLE.
BUT THEN THE NEXT, DOUBT CREEPS IN. MAYBE I'M SUPPOSED TO FOLLOW THROUGH WITH THE HARMONY RESTORATION MOVEMENT.
PROVE YOURSELF WORTHY OF THE THRONE, MY SON!
AANG, HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO FIGURE OUT WHAT'S RIGHT WHEN HIS VOICE IS ALL I HEAR?! YOU COULD HAVE SILENCED HIM FOREVER...PERHAPS THEN I COULD HAVE FOUND PEACE! BUT YOU DIDN'T, AND NOW I CAN'T!
I'M SORRY, ZUKO...
WHEN HE HAD A FIRM GRASP OF THE GOOD, YOUR FRIEND ASKED YOU FOR A PROMISE!
THE FIRE LORD'S WILL DETERMINES WHAT IS RIGHT! EMBRACE THIS TRUTH AND YOU'LL POSSESS THE PEACE THAT YOU DESIRE!
I DON'T THINK I'LL EVER STOP FEELING LOST.
NOW FULFILL YOUR PROMISE AND RESTORE THE WORLD TO HARMONY!
GO AHEAD, AANG! DO IT!

Often times, it is easy to tell if a creator is a fan of the source material based on the stories they produce. Writers that love the project they are adapting often produce something that captures the magic of the original series. Were you a fan of *Avatar the Last Airbender* and has that helped you to create tales set in this world?

I was absolutely a fan. Although I didn't watch the series when it was on TV, I watched the show on DVD all at one time. And I have to say I was pretty hooked after just the first couple of episodes. The way I got the job writing the comics was actually because of the M. Night Shyamalan movie (chuckles). I'm not a big M Night fan. I liked some of his movies but not others. My biggest problem was that here is Avatar, this richly diverse world of characters that is deeply inspired by Asian culture and peoples, but the movie specifically cast white actors in the roles. Maybe if they simply couldn't find qualified actors of color for the movie it would have made sense, but they specifically called out for Caucasian actors to fill the roles from the very beginning. So, based on my disappointment over that decision, I created a web comic that went widely viral at the time. And one of the editors at Dark Horse saw it and invited me to work on the series.

As you mentioned, one of the things that Avatar was most known for was the wonderfully diverse world and characters that made up the core of the series. It was a creative endeavor that had immense depth, lovable flawed characters, and spoke deeply of the potential for interpersonal redemption from sins of the past. How were you able to capture that magic in the comics?

I really struggled with it. My favorite character was Zuko in the original series because of that very reason. He is a flawed character that has to discover that so much of his core beliefs are dedicated to the wrong cause. And he doesn't just change over from evil to good in one step. It is a process – like a two steps forward one step backwards development. That is how it is in real life. Almost no one can make a change over from a deep rooted philosophy to some new way of thinking in one fell swoop. They have to take the journey of discovery to get there.

So many fans feel the same way. A lot of people ask me about the redemption of Zuko's sister Azula. She is the perfect villainess for most of the series, but in one episode there is moment where you see an opportunity for her to make a different choice. And everyone wants to know if there is any chance of seeing her change in the years between the end of Avatar and the beginning of The Legend of Korra. I hope to be able to continue to tell the stories based around the core five characters (as we've done for the first six stories) and be able to spend time with some of the minor characters that everyone loves.

Including Uncle Iroh? He's always been my favorite.

Yeah, we get to see some of Iroh and Zuko's continuing relationship later in the series. Iroh is a fun character.

WAIT...!
DON'T CRY...

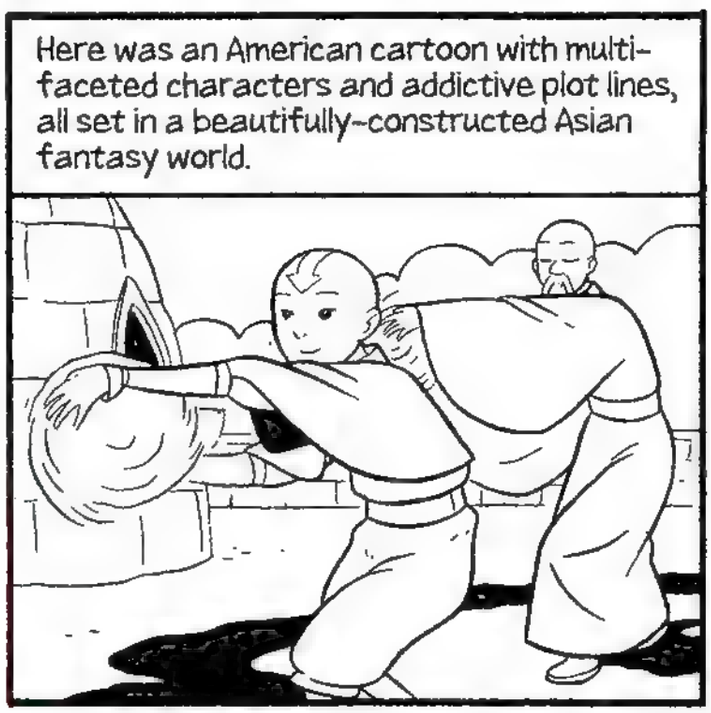
With such a deeply rich ensemble cast, were you able to give each character a chance to shine? Everyone has a favorite character and wants to see them grow and be central to the storytelling. The interactions between Aang, Sokka, and Katara as well as Prince Zuko and Uncle Iroh, were the heart and soul of the series. How do you expand upon that?

I struggled with the page limit most of all, each volume is 72 pages of story and I'm not used to having to fit the tale into a predefined space. In my own (original) work I am able to expand it to meet the story's need. At one point, I was using a spreadsheet to figure out how long each scene would be and it was just a little strange to me. But the result did allow me to focus scenes around the characters in an even way. And we were able to make sure the main characters were allowed to breathe and grow in the way they so flawlessly did in the series.

Earlier this year, the *Legend of Korra* debuted on Nickelodeon. This series chronicles the adventures of Aang's successor in a highly anticipated new storyline. Does Dark Horse have plans to produce comics based on this new incarnation?

I don't know of any rumors of Korra comics upcoming, but I would love to be a part of them if they do. Korra does affect the stories I am telling now in the Avatar series because they fit between the two arcs. In the first books, the world went from one of forced isolationism due to the Fire Lord's conquest to one with a real mingling of cultures following. We get to show how those transitions are being made and how the world is changing from the defeat of Ozai. I've really enjoyed working with this series and these characters. To have a chance to be involved in something I personally enjoy so much has been a great opportunity.

WHY I WON'T BE WATCHING THE LAST AIRBENDER MOVIE
A friend turned me onto the original *Avatar: The Last Airbender* animated series on Nickelodeon, and from the first episode I was hooked!
Gene Luen Yang, author of American Born Chinese


Here was an American cartoon with multi-faceted characters and addictive plot lines, all set in a beautifully-constructed Asian fantasy world.

The writing was not only witty, thoughtful, and clever, it showed a deep respect for and knowledge of Asian cultures. Even my wife loved it, and she usually avoids cartoons like the plague.
Don't you see?! The politics of the Fire Nation reflect those of Japan during the Meiji Restoration!
Shut up. They're gonna fight again.

MODERNIZING LOVECRAFT: AN IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW WITH ALAN MOORE, PART 2

By Adi Tantimedh

Welcome back to Bleeding Cool Magazine's in-depth conversation with Alan Moore about Lovecraft, horror, and his work modernizing the fears of the collective subconscious. In this installment, we go deeper into the mind of Moore on the life and legacy of H.P. Lovecraft and his literary work while examining the impact of warping reality in comics. Step into the twisted world of the Neonomicon and Cthulhu if you dare, with a 21st century master of modern horror and graphic storytelling...

Alan Moore is one of the latest in the line of writers to tackle Lovecraft's mythos, but what sets THE COURTYARD and NEONOMICON apart is the degree to what he deconstructs and updates Lovecraft's themes and preoccupations to the 21st Century and also faces head-on many of the subtexts inherent in Lovecraft's stories that the author himself never confronted directly.

THE SUBTEXTS IN LOVECRAFT

Blogger and COMICS JOURNAL critic Joe McCulloch wrote an essay about the second issue of NEONOMICON where Merrill Brears, very intelligently, deconstructs Lovecraft's writing. At the same time, Brears completely misses the fact there's subtext, even if it's unconscious, in Lovecraft's writing and stories, in general. McCulloch commented on how Merrill's superficial reading of Lovecraft blinded her to the sexual terror always lurking under the surface of Lovecraft's writing, and it is that blind spot that leads to her horrific ordeal of rape and murder.

"Well, her main misfortune is that she happens to live in a world where Lovecraft's stuff is real. It's true that experts on things tend to focus upon what is there, when they could perhaps make greater headway if they were to pay attention to what is not there. Obviously, Lovecraft's stories by their very self-conscious asexuality, they're a big part of the sexual equation that is either missing or is buried in that. It's obviously of supreme importance because he can't talk about it. So, yes, you don't have to be very over-familiar with Lovecraft's work to know about his ongoing theme of hybrid creatures that are the result of unnatural rituals or strange indescribable acts, you know. It's obvious what he's talking about. In the case of Arthur Jermyn ("Facts Concerning the Late Arthur Jermyn and his Family"), he's talking about somebody having sex with an ape. In the case of "The Shadow Over Innsmouth," he's talking about somebody having sex with sea monsters. In the case of "The Lurking Fear," you've got possibly a few generations of a family having sex with themselves and ending up with something like one red-eyed and one grey-eyed living in the catacombs. I thought, "It could happen. This is England." This is obviously something that's there in all of Lovecraft's work,

the idea of degeneration, generally associated with sexuality, that probably comes from the fact that Lovecraft's travelling salesman father, I believe, died of tertiary syphilis. And, Lovecraft had always got the fear that it might have been hereditary, that he might have syphilis."

ON THE LEGACY OF LOVECRAFT

Moore's relationship with Lovecraft's work begin at an early age, and it has been a lifetime of study and analysis ever since. I asked him when he read his first Lovecraft story.

"I would probably have been about 12. I can remember the occasion. It was Boxing Day, and my family had gone out at Boxing Day dinnertime to the Electric Nightclub where my dad used to work. He worked for the Electric Light Board, and this was a workingman's club for their employees. It was one of the most bore-arse occasions that you could possibly imagine. I was literally bored to tears. I think they took pity on me and said there was a newsagent over the road, and if I could buy myself a book, I could go and buy it to relieve my monotony. I went down there and there was, I think, the Pan edition of "At the Mountains of Madness," which had got a bizarre, inexplicable cover that was just like what looked like a wax dummy of a man's head wearing an eye patch. Just one of the many inappropriate cover images you used to find upon Lovecraft books back in the day, but it was "At the Mountains of Madness and Other Stories," and I took it back to the club and I thought, "What's the shortest story in here?" And it was, of course, "The Statement of Randolph Carter," which was only about five pages long. I read that and I got to the end with that voice in italics which I was soon to learn was a particular trait of Lovecraft's, coming out of the wireless telephone at the end just saying, "You fool! Warren is dead!" And I thought that was the best ending to a horror story that I'd ever heard up till that point. I was convinced then that this was a real find, and I went on to read all the other stories and then went on to pick up everything that I could by H.P. Lovecraft. Very soon, within a couple of years, I was starting to hang around with comics fans who'd got like, copies of The Arkham Collector and Arkham House books that - I've got quite a few of them now – I've never even seen one. Yeah, it all sort of went from there, really. I went through the phase of, I'd read, what was it, Colin Wilson in THE OUTSIDER, where he completely rubbishes H.P. Lovecraft as a writer. I read this after I read Colin Wilson's book "The Mind Parasites" and I thought, "This sounds like somebody who is reacting against his school teacher." It was obviously based upon Lovecraft and it wasn't a lot better-written than H.P. Lovecraft. I thought, all right, it had obviously some of H.P. Lovecraft's stylistic stumbling blocks, but at the time when I read that, because

I was young and 15 or something, 16, I was given to insecurities and snobbery, I thought, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, Lovecraft is a terrible writer, isn't he? Why didn't I realize that before? Thank goodness that someone as intelligent as Colin Wilson pointed that out to me before I made a complete fool of myself." Then after a while, I found myself returning to Lovecraft and I thought, "Actually, I don't care if he's a bad writer. There was something in his psychological make-up that conveyed itself to the reader through the intervening pages of the story, that he was genuinely phobic about almost everything. And this is what speaks to the reader, and it doesn't really matter with the language that's couched in." Then more recently, over the last ten years, I looked at it again, and I thought, "yeah, he's a good writer." I would still agree with my earlier appraisal that his, you know, pretty much across-the-board set of phobias that provides the fuel, but I don't think his sesquipedalian use of language is a fault. I think that his use of archaic words is that it's something about the language that Lovecraft gets all his effects from using words that are themselves kind of repulsive, like "squamous," things like that. Or, because of his early love for the work of Arthur Machen, where Machen will use whole sections of Gaelic to give an alien effect to his stories. That's obviously where Lovecraft got his Aklo language from. It's obvious that Lovecraft understood that words themselves have a crepuscular power, that actually, the kind of language you use dictates the reader's reaction to the story. If you start messing around with language, it does do something to people's heads. I speak after having 18 months ago spent a month trying to write the 35 pages of my Lucia Joyce chapter of JERUSALEM. You come out of that at the other end and you're barely thinking in English anymore. And you're having strange thoughts, alien thoughts, because the language that we think in determines what we think. With Lovecraft kind of derailing language, it's almost a similar kind of approach to that of William Burroughs, who is a writer I associate with H.P. Lovecraft."

ON THE BRIEF, STRANGE LIFE OF H.P. LOVECRAFT

"Lovecraft and Burroughs, they were kind of both born to a sort of old-fashioned nobility, almost. They kind of both fell on harder times, and they were both writing about, to some degree, the same inhuman forces outside Space-Time trying to get in, although Lovecraft called them The Great Old One, Burroughs called them The Nova Mob, but essentially the same thing. They were both crazy about cats. They only seemed to be able to truly, truly love cats. And, of course, in his final days, Bill Burroughs was re-reading H.P. Lovecraft out there in Kansas. There's similarities there. Both of them... I'm not sure they'd have got on, though Lovecraft did have a number of gay friends. Whether he knew they were

gay or not, I'm not sure. He might have found something in Burroughs, just in that Olde Worlde gentlemanly manner, something to admire. I tend to think of Lovecraft to more likely to be asexual than to be homosexual. One of the things with Lovecraft's horror is that it's not supernatural. There is barely a shred of supernatural horror in any of Lovecraft's work. He was a materialist; so all his horror is physical. The creatures of the Cthulu mythos are horrible because of what they represent. They are horrible because of what they look like. So this tends to suggest, as I point out in NEONOMICON (not that it needed pointing out), that there is a pronounced genital aspect to an awful lot of Lovecraft's creatures and his horrific effects, his white slime, all the rest of it. It's difficult not to read that without thinking of Lovecraft's horror of the physical to the extent of a horror of the idea of physical sex, of what it entails. We've heard the rumors about him making love to Sonia (Greene) with all his clothes on. That might be true, if he ever made love to Sonia, I don't know. I don't know if he even got that far. I mean, that thing about the closest sign of affection he could make was to touch fingertips and just go 'uh' once... That's apparently true. It was all in his head, I think, and Sex wasn't something he felt comfortable about having in his head. It all became part of, again, William Burroughs. There was a phase, when Burroughs was in his misogynist phase, he was talking about women in general as "the other half," as some kind of Venusian ectoplasm disease. That's not at all different to the way Lovecraft saw women. Lovecraft, I think, essentially saw... he's into a different theme, whether that was gender difference or a different racial background. And, yeah, in later life, he looked back and regretted it. He seemed to say that, he realized, it was all a pose. It was all a pose that was borne of adolescent insecurity. Very much like when I stopped

drinking in the year 2000, not because I'd been a heavy drinker before that, but... yeah, I'll still have a bottle of sake if I'm out at a restaurant with Mel, but I stopped drinking in 2000 largely because I realized that I'd never really liked the taste of beer. I just pretended to when I was 14 because I'd been under the misapprehension that that would me appear more manly, and this would make me popular with girls. Actually, if I'd been honest about it, I was a lot more of a cherryade man, but it carried on until later life, until I was in my forties before I thought, "Why am I drinking this?" I don't really enjoy it. I suspect that that might be similar to Lovecraft's renunciation of the anti-Semitism, that it was an affectation that he'd picked up when he was a teenager pretending to be an old man. Because in all of his letters to his acolytes, who were a couple of years younger than him, and he was in his twenties, because he didn't live past his thirties did he? So he was in his twenties and he was writing all these letters where he was talking about himself as "your grandfather Theobald." He was projecting himself into this wise old man, probably a wise old man living somewhere in the 18th Century. And he wanted to avoid the world, the century that he found himself in."

"He might have imagined he might have been happier if he had been born, I think in the 18th Century, back in the 1700s. That's when he would have liked it most, when he could have worn a periwig. He often used to depict himself wearing 18th Century clothing, some kind of Mayflower fantasy that he'd got going on for himself. He was a tremendous Anglophile and he affected what he thought was a kind of English attitude. A very strange man, but on the other hand, given his background, a mother who was seeing things stepping out of the corner of her eye and was taking arsenic to whiten her skin. She was, of course, the one who dressed him as a girl

because she wanted a girl, and apparently you could see pictures of him when he had lovely long, blond hair... Lovely-looking child, but you wouldn't know he was a boy. And I think it was also her that impressed upon him the idea that he was physically ugly. All right, he was no oil painting, but he wasn't ugly. He was a good-looking man in certain ways, you know? Big, dreamy eyes, he had a long chin but other than that... Yeah, he'd got an absentee father who was an archetypal travelling salesman basically kind of moving around from dirty joke to dirty joke, acquired syphilis along the way, finally going mad in a hotel room, there's no stability there. There's his two aunts. They are the most stable influence in his life. Were they both maiden aunts? One of them had married and something had happened. There wasn't a husband at the time Lovecraft ended his stay in New York and his marriage ended with Sonia and swung back to Providence and went to live with his aunties. There were no men around at that time, so two maiden aunts who... he was returning to his childhood. They used to feed him upon baked beans and ice cream. Probably it was just as well, because when it came to feeding himself, it was a kind of game of Russian Roulette because he'd got all these tins in the cupboard which, back then, didn't use to have a sell-by date. He'd be eking out his meager living... in some of his letters he'd be talking about 'the grand repast' that he had just enjoyed which is a couple of frankfurters and a can of beans. Obviously, it was stomach cancer that eventually took him out. Probably his diet didn't help. In the 1930s where they'd be preserving carrots in paraffin... it's almost surprising he lasted as long as he did."

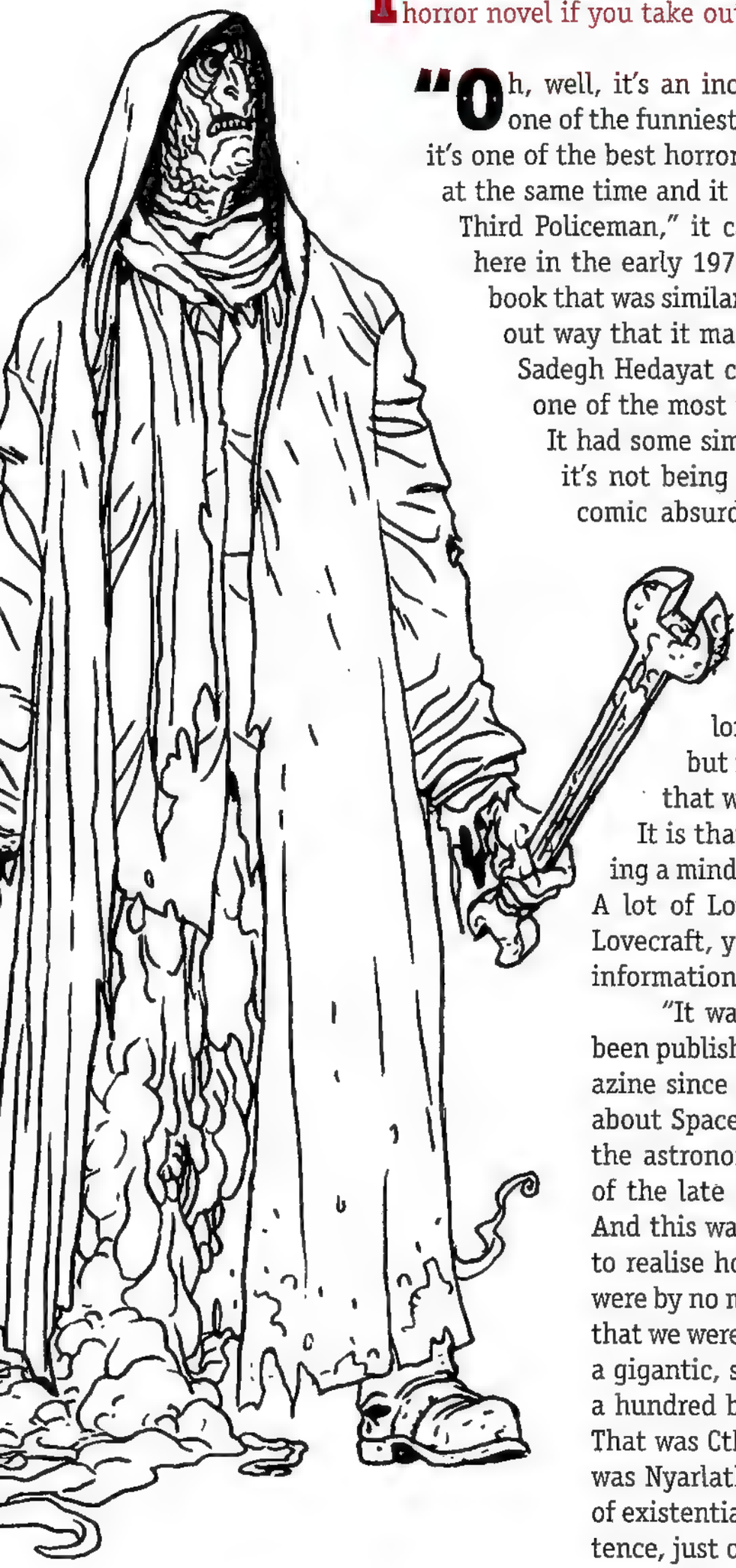
"I think that he was an arrested man. Although he was pretending to be Grandfather Theobald, an old man, that's something that a child does. You look at Lovecraft's life and you see this arrested childhood that must have been a horror for him in many respects, but which he didn't know how to leave. I suspect that his story "The Outsider," which was his first published story, there you've got the archetypal Lovecraft story. I suspect that there you've got the person living in this sheltered environment with the other monsters somewhere deep underground and who wants to see what the world is like and so finds himself, after climbing and climbing, at this splendid social gathering where everybody screams and, after a bit of business with a mirror, realises they are screaming at this creature that has dared to leave the world of its childhood and its upbringing and is now lost in the real world. I think that's what Lovecraft felt about himself."

ON LOVECRAFT'S INFLUENCES AND PRECEDENTS

Lovecraft read widely and thought deeply about supernatural fiction, and was strongly influenced by British writers like William Hope Hodgson and Arthur Machen. This drove Moore to also learn about Lovecraft's literary precedents and their own influences.

"One of the things that was in that very first copy of "At the Mountains of Madness and Other Stories," was "The Dream-Quest of the Unknown Kadath," which was a very, very long and kind of atypical Randolph Carter story that Lovecraft wrote. And there was "Supernatural Horror in Literature," that was how I got my education, reading through that, hearing most of these names almost for the first time. I mean, not Poe, not Nathaniel Hawthorne, obviously, but William Hope Hodgson, first time I heard of him was through Lovecraft. Probably the same is true of Arthur Machen and Lord Dunsany and all those guys, I became acquainted with them through Lovecraft. Yes, he'd certainly read Hodgson, another fascinating guy. I was talking to Dara O'Brian about Hodgson, because Dara O'Brian is a huge Flann O'Brien fan, as am I. I was talking about something that Iain Sinclair had told me after I had situated that in the New Traveller's Almanac, that "The House on the Borderland" from the Hodgson story, which I knew to be on the West Coast of Ireland, I'd situated that very close to where the Mather's house from "THE THIRD POLICEMAN" is situated, because I thought there is some sort of kinship there that feels right. When I mentioned this to Iain Sinclair, he said, "Well, actually, you're probably right." Because that site on the coast was where I believe Hodgson had got a clergyman brother that he used to visit, and he'd seen the sort of houses up on the cliff-tops and I think there was one house that was over a chasm. So he wrote his fantasy "The House on the Borderland" after seeing that. Apparently, the writer Iris Murdoch some sixty years later, she was visiting on the West Coast of Ireland, and without having ever heard of William Hope Hodgson or "The House on the Borderland," she wrote a novel about a recluse that was living up in one of these cliff-top houses over a chasm, with strange psychological forces bubbling up into reality. It's almost as if some landscapes had got some stories embedded in them already. What Iain was saying was, that not far from there, there is a big, bleak peat bog. In the middle of it, there is a stone cottage, which is where all of the Dublin writers used to go to dry out. Brendon Behan, Flann O'Brien, it was quite possibly during one of these kinds of rehab spells, a very crude and basic rehab but that was the general idea, it was probably during one of those spells that O'Brien had started work on "The Third Policeman." So they probably connected."

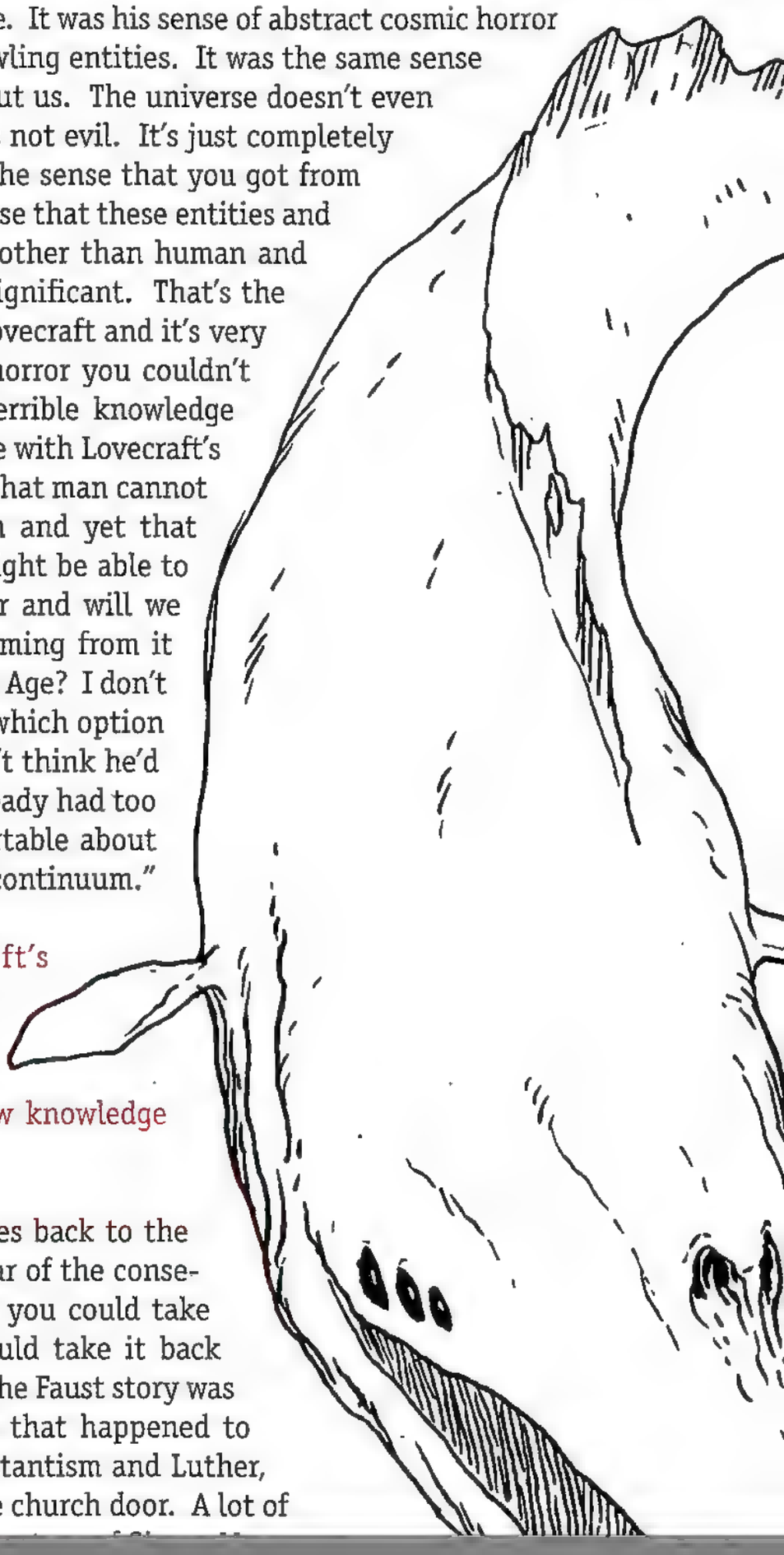
I noted that "The Third Policeman" can be seen as a kind of horror novel if you take out all the jokes.



"Oh, well, it's an incredibly funny comic novel. It's one of the funniest comic novels I've ever read, and it's one of the best horror novels I've ever read. It's both at the same time and it does it effortlessly. I read "The Third Policeman," it came out in Picador Books over here in the early 1970s at the same time as another book that was similar not in tone, but in the creeped-out way that it made you feel. This was a book by Sadegh Hedayat called "The Blind Owl," which is one of the most frightening books I'd ever read. It had some similarities... it's not funny at all, it's not being jocular, it's not got any of the comic absurdist science references as "The Third Policeman," but there are some things about it that are very reminiscent of the horror aspects of "The Third Policeman." This is probably a long way away from H.P. Lovecraft, but maybe not... Existential Horror, that was what I was just going to say. It is that the horror of existing, of having a mind, of being in a physical universe. A lot of Lovecraft's... in the character of Lovecraft, you could see there is a horror of information as well.

"It was facts. I mean, Lovecraft had been publishing an amateur astronomy magazine since he was a child. He understood about Space. He was also keeping up with the astronomical and scientific discoveries of the late 19th and early 20th Centuries. And this was a time when we were starting to realise how big the universe was and we were by no means the center of the universe, that we were just in the western spiral arm of a gigantic, sprawling, elliptical galaxy with a hundred billion suns. That was a horror. That was Cthulu. That was Azathoth. That was Nyarlathotep. It was Lovecraft's sense of existential cosmic horror at physical existence, just on this tiny fleck of dirt orbiting a spark somewhere in the almost-infinite

reaches of a black, empty universe. It was his sense of abstract cosmic horror that he physicalized into his crawling entities. It was the same sense of: the universe doesn't care about us. The universe doesn't even know we're here. The universe is not evil. It's just completely indifferent to us. And that was the sense that you got from Cthulu. There's not really the sense that these entities and monsters are evil, they are just other than human and they don't care. We're really insignificant. That's the true horror at the back of H.P. Lovecraft and it's very galactic, modern horror. It's a horror you couldn't have had before we had that terrible knowledge crushing in upon us. It's the same with Lovecraft's quote that the greatest mercy is that man cannot correlate all of this information and yet that time is coming soon when we might be able to put all our information together and will we embrace it, or will we run screaming from it into the shadows of The New Dark Age? I don't think there's much doubt about which option H.P. Lovecraft would take. I don't think he'd have embraced it. I think he already had too much of it to be entirely comfortable about his existence in this space-time continuum."



This goes back to Lovecraft's other recurring theme is the notion that it's not a good idea to acquire this new knowledge because this new knowledge is dangerous.

"That is something that goes back to the fear of Knowledge, the fear of the consequences of Knowledge. I mean, you could take that back to Faust, and you could take it back even further than that. A lot of the Faust story was a piece of Christian propaganda that happened to coincide with the birth of Protestantism and Luther, you know, nailing his edict to the church door. A lot of

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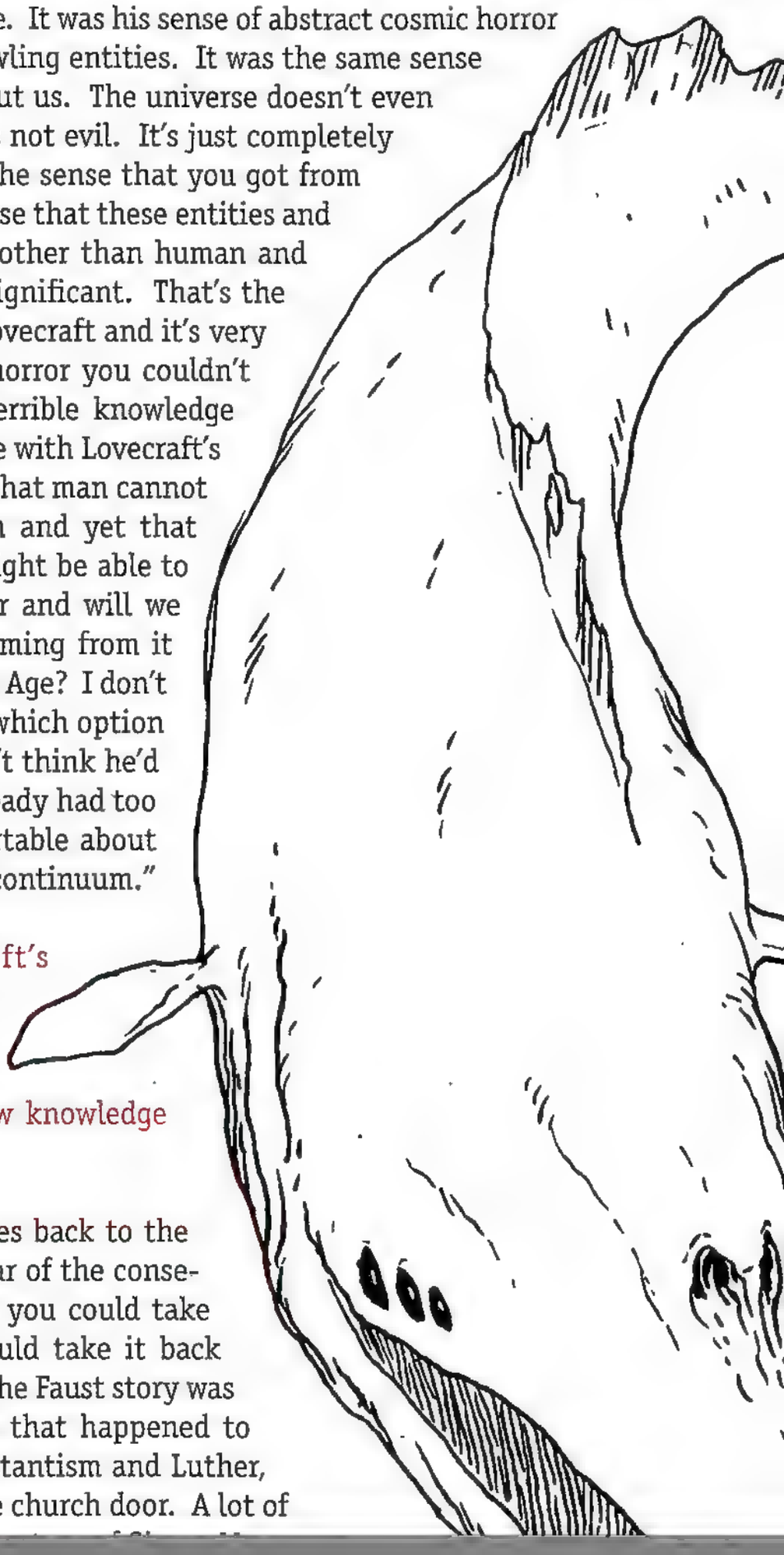

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get you." And that was taken over to the Faust story where Faust's sin is wanting knowledge. Again, it's the same anti-Gnostic message. Although I don't doubt that he's an anti-Gnostic, I think that Lovecraft was... because he was phobic about what new information could do to him, how it can haunt him. It might be that in a lot of his stories, yes, he falls back upon that old motto of "There are things that Man should not know." It's a convenient form if you have the kind of sensibilities that Lovecraft had. It fits in very nicely with that kind of sensibility."

In both THE COURTYARD and NEONOMICON, the acquiring of knowledge result in catastrophe on an epic scale. In THE COURTYARD, it brings about Aldo Sax' downfall where he's driven insane and he becomes a murderer. In the case of NEONOMICON, Agent Brears acquires this new knowledge but she gets raped and impregnated with Cthulu, who will bring on the End of Humanity.

"Both of them reached a new state. They're not thinking like humans anymore, because they got new language. And I submit that if we had a non-human language, as we understood it, we wouldn't be thinking like humans anymore. I think that our consciousness is entirely predicated upon our Language, and this was why I had a lot of fun with THE COURTYARD, actually coming up with what seemed like plausible definitions for some random Lovecraftian phrases that would actually suggest a different way of seeing things. The "yhhnnrrgr," which is a kind of nested perception of Time.

"It's kind of understanding that all events are embedded in later events. It's a sort of physicalization of Time, which seemed appropriate. I just thought it up because it was a strange idea in THE COURTYARD, but it seemed appropriate to the way that I ended up using it in NEONOMICON. And the various other ideas, the "dho nha," the inhabiting force that actually gives meaning to its receptacle, again, which became very appropriate in the final scenes of NEONOMICON, even though I had just thought it up as a kind of weird concept that Lovecraftian entities might have, or the concept of negative conceptual space surrounding a thing. Again, it's not a usual thought and perhaps this ties into what we were saying earlier about sometimes the most important thing is not what is there.

It's the negative conceptual space surrounding it, the stuff that is not there that is the important thing. Yeah, these things that were just made up randomly that sounded alien in THE COURTYARD turned out to make perfect sense and to be endlessly applicable in NEONOMICON."

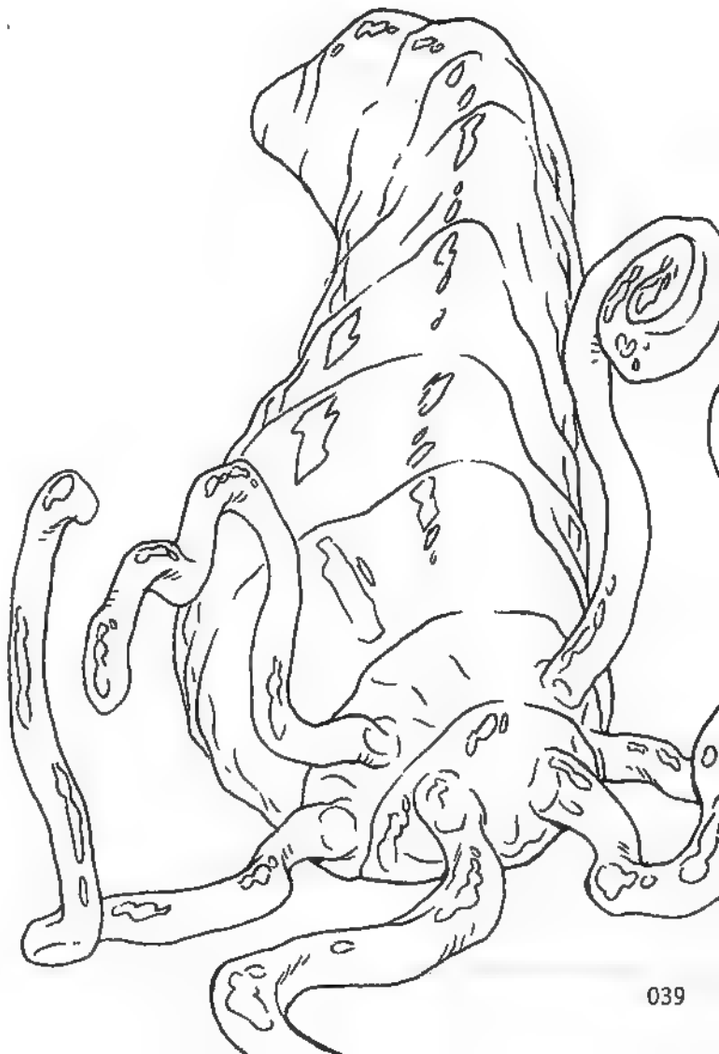
One phrase that can be used is "the disease of Language." This is a recurring theme in Moore's work, all the way back to a FUTURE SHOCK short story he wrote for 2000AD at the beginning of his career, where the astronauts on a spaceship are infected by a language that is the alien invasion. The mutability of Language, Space and Time is an idea Moore has been thinking about for decades, and one he has always explored in his work, all the way from 2000AD to his CAPTAIN BRITAIN stories, even in WATCHMEN, FROM HELL and now THE COURTYARD and NEONOMICON.

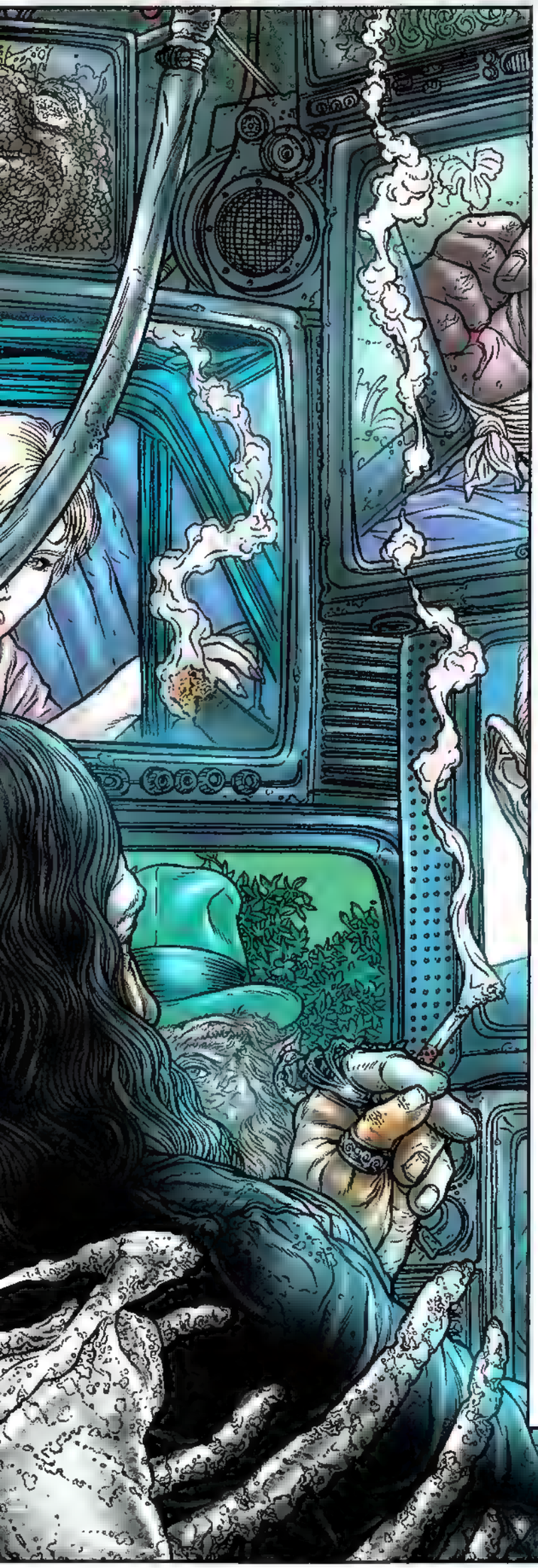
"Well, everything's a disease of language, isn't it? That phrase, I believe it was originally used by Aleister Crowley to describe Magick. But no, Eddie Campbell pointed out to me that it had originally been used by J.R.R. Tolkein. I think he was talking about Fantasy or Mythology. Mythology was a disease of language, which is also true. But, of course, technology is a disease of language in the logic part of it, writings about an area of knowledge. That's what 'technology' meant. And pretty much everything, Consciousness itself, we are assured, is preceded by language. You do not have consciousness until you have a word, you do not have a concept for something until you have a word for it, which sounds counterintuitive but it's what we are assured by modern linguistic theorists is the way it pans out. So, yeah, it's all a disease of language. Like I said, with Lovecraft, you mess about with the language, you mess about with consciousness. And I think that this might be one of the reasons for the abiding power of Lovecraft's stories and Lovecraft's anthologies."

ON WARPING REALITY IN COMICS

What is especially interesting in NEONOMICON is that Moore doesn't just experiment with verbal and written language, but also with visual language and the language of comics, like when Brears and her fellow FBI agents pursue a suspect to a wall only to find that he's a painting, in one of the more eerie scenes that serve as an example of storytelling that can only be achieved in a comic. It is an effect that would not look convincing in live action with CGI, because it would just visibly be seen as CGI or creative editing, whereas in comics, there is a natural, organic flow.

"The thing is, in comics, it's all drawn by an artist, so a real human figure in the foreground is going to look pretty much continuous with a drawn figure on a wall. There's no disparity between them so





that is probably an effect you could only use in comics. Yeah, it's a visual trick. It misleads or is a shocking and horrific effect, hopefully a disturbing effect. It's also kind of saying this is not all on one level, that in this story, what you think you're looking at might not be what you're looking at. There are layers here, you know, in the language, in the thinking, in the visuals. I was trying to use the visual language of comics. It's not a flashy piece. It's not PROMETHEA #32 or something like that. It's not a Transformer, it doesn't turn into a sort of genetic sculpture or anything like that. It's kind of restrained in many ways, but I kind of like that widescreen panel, that repetitive panel shape, that seemed to work nicely. It seemed to ground the story in a relentless sort of frame."

The scene becomes an interesting subversion of the storyboard approach to comic books where it's supposed to replicate a movie that's supposedly very linear and very normal-seeming because there aren't crazy panel layouts and bursts of colour like in PROMETHEA #32. It's deceptively almost staid, and with that you can use to create a much more subtle and insidious effect.

"It's also, because if you use a repeated panel shape, it's just like the proscenium arch at a theatre that eventually, the audience forgets it's there, so there is a much greater capacity or capability for absorption that's hopefully, if you're writing at your best, hopefully the readers should forget for a while that they're reading. They should somehow just be in there in that world, and it should be real while they're reading this story."

IN CONCLUSION

Our culture has reached the age where Lovecraft has seeped into popular culture to the point where he's almost normalized and become virtually a joke. On G4TV's ATTACK OF THE SHOW, there is a recurring sketch featuring a goth girl explaining Lovecraft's fiction with the aid of a domesticated and childish Cthulu who acts like a naughty pet. In Japan, there is a series of light novels and an anime series featuring Nyartholatep transforming into a cute big-eyed schoolgirl to hang out with a schoolboy that she'd taken a liking. Moore was bemused and slightly bewildered to hear the crawling chaos with the three large burning eyes getting the hots for a Japanese schoolboy. He has also seen other pieces of almost postmodernist cross-referential fiction that ties Lovecraft's mythos to other pulp characters and worlds.

"Someone sent me, I think it was partly written by James Van Hise? This piece that was working from the premise that H.P. Lovecraft had, at one point in his life, written comic stories for the Standard-stroke- line of comics that we revived for TOM STRONG. It was a very strange book; I think Jess Nevins sent it along to me, that'd got an explanation as to how all the very obscure Standard comic characters like The Black Terror and Doc Strange all fitted into this Cthulu Mythos. They were making up comic book stories that retroactively had The Black Terror meet some Lovecraftian creature. I couldn't quite see the point of it because the odds of someone being a real Lovecraft fan and a real fan of Standard Comics still in the 1940s would seem to be pretty long odds. It would have to be quite a niche."

At the end of the day, Moore offered his take on popular culture's attempts to normalize Lovecraft's mythos and turn them into a joke, and the reason he wrote THE COURTYARD and NEONOMICON as unrepentant and uncompromising tales of horror.

"I think... this is perhaps fanciful, but Lovecraft and his writings and his ideas, they're kind of like an illness. Because what we're talking about here, in its basic form, is a horror, an existential horror of the cosmos. It's a kind of mental illness. And it's perhaps an illness, a consciousness that is spread much like the alien consciousness in NEONOMICON by a kind of language. In Lovecraft's case, by his archaic pop American. It might be that, if Lovecraft's ideas and concepts are a kind of illness, then to treat them lightly... to treat them as just characters that can be absorbed nicely into pop culture... that might be a kind of immune response, applying antibodies of humour that can defuse the terrible potency that Lovecraft had kind of hardwired into these concepts through his own phobia. I suppose that, bringing it back briefly to NEONOMICON, if I was trying to do anything with that, it was to restore some of the devastating horror that I felt when I read those last hard words of "The Statement of Randolph Carter." Because you don't just repeat that. You don't do what a lot of Lovecraftian writers do; you don't repeat all of the man's tics and his stylistic devices. Try and get back to something that is as frightening as he found them. I suppose what I was trying to do on one level was, "All right, you want a Lovecraftian horror story? I'll give you a Lovecraftian horror story." It will be very Lovecraftian, and it will be very horrifying. And I hope that, if NEONOMICON achieved anything, if it managed to put some of the fear of God back into reading H.P. Lovecraft, then I think that it will have served its purpose."

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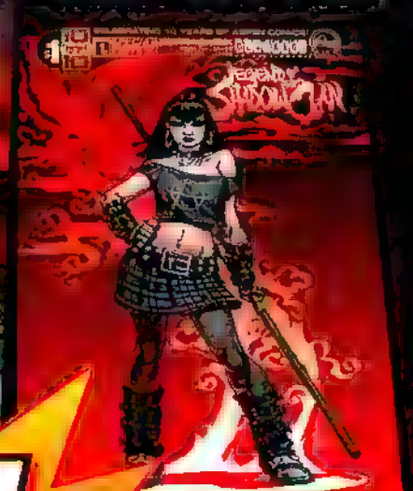

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Triumph Over Tragedy

Aspen Celebrates Ten Years with Ten New Titles

By Rick Verbanas

"I wanted to give back to the fans and retailers who have supported us all of these years, and this was the way I felt we could be the most effective."
—Frank Mastromauro

TRIUMPH OVER TRAGEDY
by Rick Verbanas

Aspen Comics has done what many other comic publishers have not. What many critics said they could not do, especially after beloved founder, Michael Turner, passed away from cancer in 2008.

They turned ten.

In fact, 2013 not only marks their tenth anniversary, but an even more compelling one: five years with Michael Turner and five years without.

"Mike's legacy still contributes to the growth of Aspen," stated Peter Steigerwald, who, along with current co-owner Frank Mastromauro, co-founded Aspen with Turner in 2003. "His creations, *Fathom* and *Soulfire*, are the flagships of our company, and how he conducted himself personally and in business still factor into our decisions."

Mastromauro agrees. "Mike was one of the most gracious and nicest people on the planet. He created a great atmosphere that people just gravitated towards."

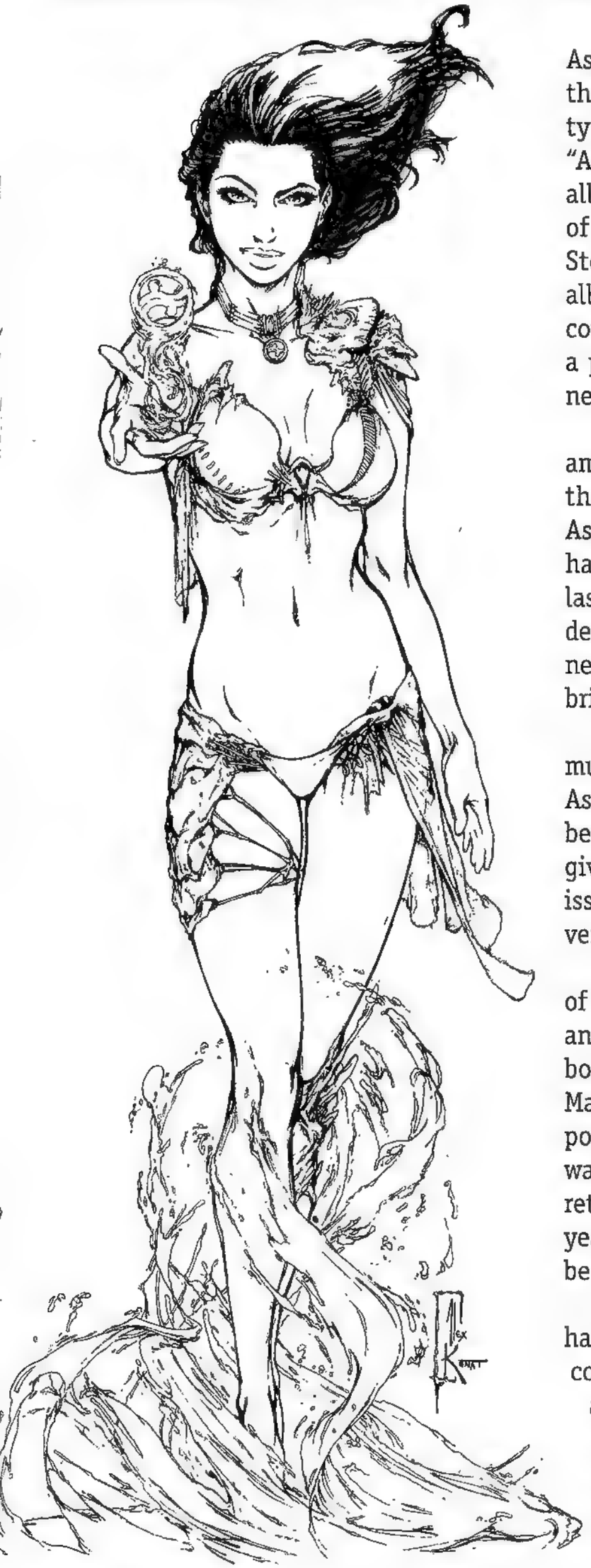
With Turner being among the most sought-after artists at the time leading up to his passing – while at Aspen he was still being commissioned by Marvel and DC to create variant covers for their hottest books– as well as being such a well-liked and well-respected person in the industry, there were doubts Aspen could succeed without him.

"In the years since his passing, it's been a lot of hard work and sleepless nights keeping things going," Steigerwald admitted. "Mike died before the economy tanked. There's been a lot of struggles. There were some tight times - but we're here."

Aspen was originally designed to allow Steigerwald and Mastromauro run the company, freeing Turner to focus on his art. "He knew what he could do and what we could do, he wanted to be free to create and he trusted us to run the rest," Steigerwald said. "He knew he could have a successful business with Frank and I managing things and showcasing/promoting his art and vision. That was true when he was alive, and those same skills of ours have kept things going after he passed."

The last five years has seen Aspen staying true to its core, and growing in result.

"We've grown Aspen's line and brand a lot in that time, despite many people writing us off in the months and years after Mike died," Steigerwald said proudly. "We've done that by allowing the creative visions of the core members of Aspen to shine and selectively partnering with other creators. Since the day we founded this company, we always wanted to tell the best, most beautiful, meaningful stories. We weren't concerned with genre, or trends, as long as the stories were good. We have a reputation as an art based company because we choose to work with some mighty talented people, but we're successful because we tell the best stories we can."



With this approach to publishing, Aspen has had a wide variety of series over the last ten years, creating many different types of stories. Rather than having an "Aspen Universe," the founders decided to allow each story to be unique. "Each set of characters exist in their own world," Steigerwald explained. "They do occasionally interact or appear with each other in covers and pinups, but each title is about a particular story. It exists in the world it needs to exist in."

This year, Aspen will be expanding the amount of worlds fans can visit. To celebrate their huge tenth anniversary milestone, Aspen has decided to allow the creators who have been instrumental to their success the last ten years to launch new series near and dear to their hearts. Five will feature brand new properties, while the other five will be bringing back popular characters.

Realizing ten new series may be too much to add to anyone's pull list all at once, Aspen will launch a new series each month, beginning in February. Another reason to give Aspen's "Ten for Ten" a try, the first issue for each of these series will have a very affordable price tag of only one dollar.

"My hope is that by releasing all ten of these new series at one dollar, retailers and fans who might not stock or read Aspen books regularly will give us a chance," said Mastromauro. "It's a big risk with the price point, but I didn't want to do it any other way. I wanted to give back to the fans and retailers who have supported us all of these years, and this was the way I felt we could be the most effective."

As a special bonus for true Aspen diehards, Aspen will releasing a special "reserve cover" edition for each first issue which will also be part of a massive Aspen "Ten for Ten" poster featuring every new series and more.

While all of this adds up for a very attractive marketing campaign, Aspen

knows the real determination on whether ten months of launches will be successful will fall on the quality of their product.

"I know I've been saying a lot about how we like to tell great stories, but it's true," Steigerwald promised. "These are great and beautiful books."

Which series will make Aspen's "Ten for Ten" starting this February?

Kicking off this celebration will be *Legend of the Shadow Clan* by creators David Wohl and Brad Foxhoven (Executive Assistant: Iris) with art by Cory Smith and John Starr. This story will focus on kids who discover they're the next generation in a long line of Ninjas. "Who wouldn't want to discover they're part of a secret family destiny," Steigerwald asked. "And did I say, 'Ninja'? Ninja!"

Fans who have been requesting more *Shrugged* will be see this comedy adventure series return in March. Created by Mastromauro with art by Jonathan Marks

and Beth Sotelo, this series centers around a high school teenager named Theo, and the opposing forces of good and evil which literally manifest themselves as differing personalities on his shoulder.

In April, creator J.T. Krul and artist Anthony Marquez deliver *Jirni*. This all-new series is an epic fantasy-adventure story featuring a heroic princess in search of her captive mother, with an otherworldly setting in the vein of John Carter of Mars.

May's *Charismagic* returns us to the world of druids, griffin steeds, and the void. This popular series centers on Las Vegas magician Hank Medley who discovered he had real magic by accidentally making the world disappear, and he must help save the world from and ancient evil that is invading Earth from another realm. "Medley is back and so is the ultra-sexy Sudana, and the absolute fan-favorite-magical-talking-cat, Sparkles," added Steigerwald.

Bubblegun, debuting in June, is a brand new futuristic action adventure story about a fractured team of cyber punk bounty

hunters set in world where information is power and computer anarchy runs rampant. Created by Mark Roslan, with art by Mike Bowden and David Curiel.

July will mark the 15th anniversary of Turner launching *Fathom* at San Diego Comic Con, and Aspen will launch the all-new series in the same fashion, written by David Wohl with art by Alex Konat and Beth Sotelo. "If you haven't checked out this amazing book about an underwater race of people, now's the perfect time," Steigerwald said.

Much along the lines of Aspen's 2003 debut allowing readers to choose between Michael Turner's *Soulfire* or *Ekos*, the fans will decide which series Aspen publishes in August: *Awaken Skies* or *Overtaken*.

"I couldn't think of a better way to help celebrate our 10 year anniversary than by bringing it full circle, back to our very beginning," Mastromauro explained. "By allowing fans and retailers the opportunity to help decide my next project, it was our way to pay homage to the voting event that kicked off the start of our company."

Everyone's favorite *Executive Assistant*, Iris, returns in September. The story of a trained assassin and courtesan, who's broken free of her master and is now out working against the system, returns for its fourth volume.

October's new offering, *Trish Out of Water*, is about a young high school teenager who discovers she has powers beyond anything she could ever imagine, all while trying to finish high school. Created by Vince Hernandez, with art by Giuseppe Cafaro and Nei Ruffino, this series promises to be for those who always wished their life was something more.

Aspen's other flagship title, Michael Turner's *Soulfire*, returns for its epic fifth volume in November. "Magic and technology have always conflicted, they're different ways to arrange the world, gain power or discover mysteries," explained Steigerwald. "Soulfire is all about that conflict and the role that destiny plays in one boy's life. It's

got mythic warriors, dragons, cyborgs and above all adventure and romance. If you're not buying this book, you're missing out."

While Aspen has big plans for 2013, what do they expect to see in the next ten years?

"Still putting out great comics and enjoying our properties in other mediums," shared Mastromauro. His partner agreed. "Comics, Movies, TV shows, products. As an artist, I'm always looking for new ways to grow my own craft, and the same holds true for Aspen. Our core has always been to do great things," Steigerwald added.

While Aspen is proud to have overcome so many obstacles and to be celebrating ten years in 2013, the lessons they learned and the growth they have made have tempered them to be publishing far in to the future, regardless of what comes their way.

"Dealing with Mike's loss and finding a new way forward was tough, but when we started this company in 2003 we immediately encountered challenges," shared Steigerwald. "Back then, we clawed our way through and came out stronger. Going through the ups and downs relating to Mike's cancer taught us to be vigilant and flexible. Now that I think on it, the story of Aspen really is the story of overcoming obstacles. You can't beat us."

Betting on the Ponies

IDW Wins Big with My Little Pony ***By Rick Verbanas***

BETTING ON THE PONIES:
IDW WINS BIG WITH MY LITTLE PONY
by Rick Verbanas

My mother always warned against betting on the ponies. And, if someone offered you a bet earlier this year *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* #1 would outsell the best-selling X-title for Marvel Comics, you would have probably laughed in their face. But, who is getting the last laugh?

"I outsold *Uncanny X-Men*," Katie Cook, writer of *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* comic series, announced to cheers at the New York Comic Con in October. The first issue of the new IDW Publishing comic series, starring Twilight, Applejack, Rarity, Fluttershy, Rainbow Dash, and Pinkie Pie, sold out of a 100,000-copy print run through Diamond Comics Distributors. In fact, *My Little Pony* #1 ranked 15th overall in November, and 1st among non-Marvel/DC titles. It beat out all but one of the Marvel Now relaunch #2 issues, as well as Batman "Death of the Family" tie-ins.

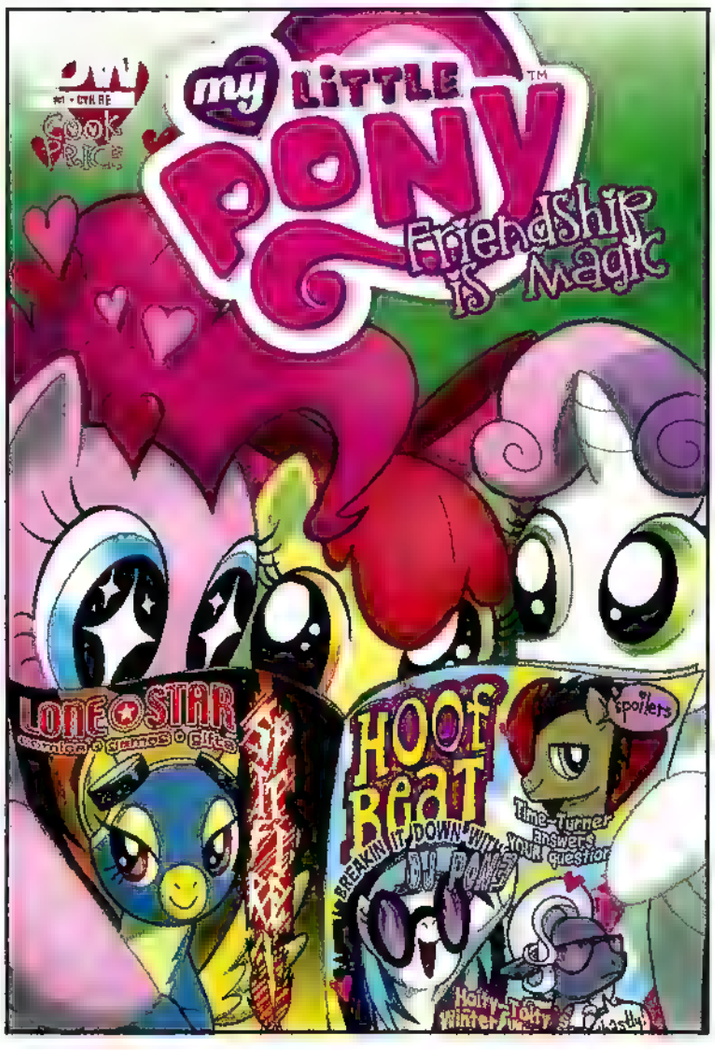
That's a lot of comics, especially for one that ties in to a toy line and cartoon aimed at young girls.

"It's not just for little kids," Cook said. "It is for all ages."

It appears Cook was 100% dead-on. Part of the reason for its initial success can be attributed to "Bronies."

Originally a successful toy-line in the 1980's, Hasbro's My Little Pony brand was re-launched in 2003. *The My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* animated series premiered in October of 2010 on The Hub TV Network, and it soon became an unexpected hit.

The television series, lauded for its humor and well-written plot lines, has attracted a substantial following of older viewers, predominately male teenagers and young adults. Known as a "Brony," (pronounced "Bro-Nee") a term morphed from "bro" and "pony," this fan falls into the highly sought-after 18-35 year old demographic, typical of many comic book stores' customer-base. Some like to be referred to as "Colts," while the older female viewers are often referred by the term, "Pegasisters." However you

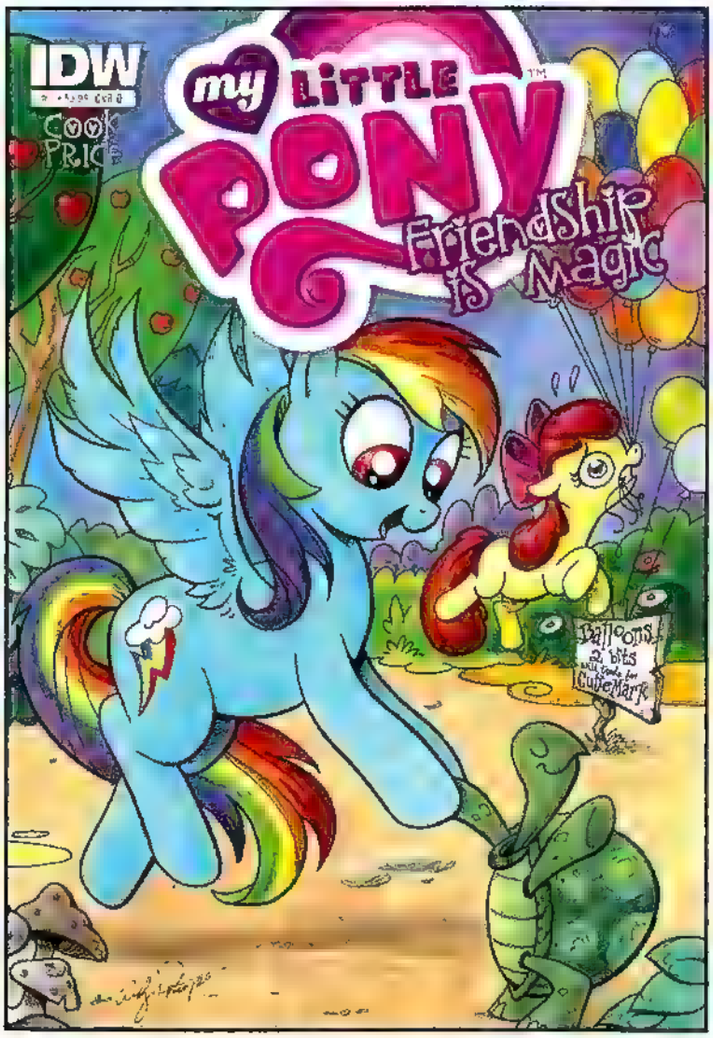


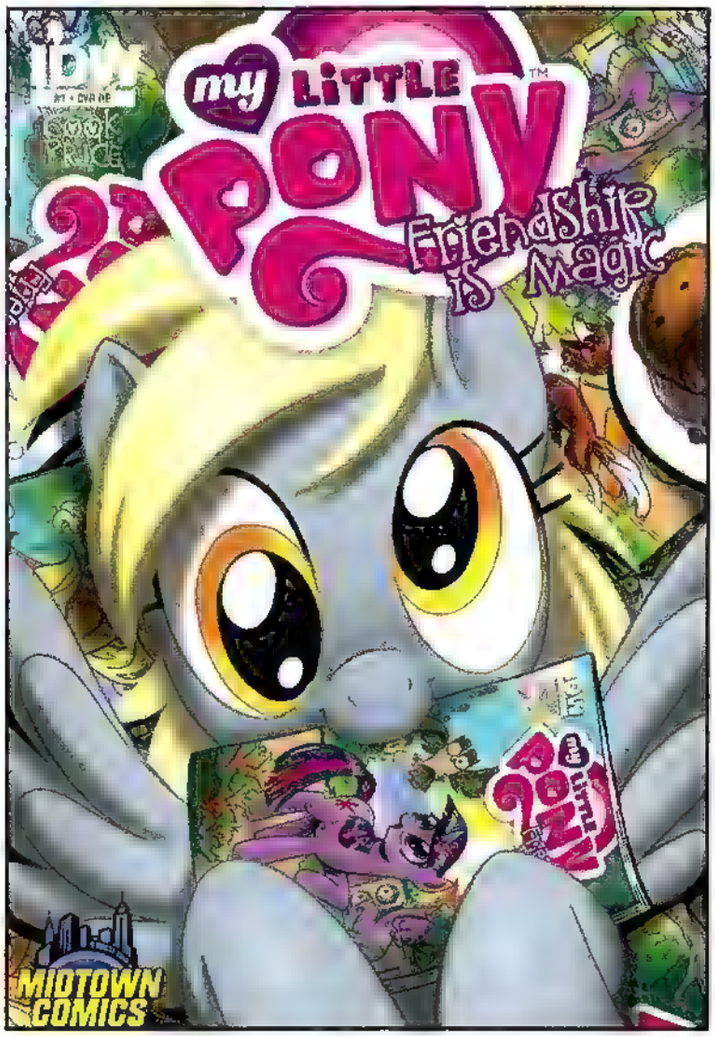
want to label them, My Little Pony has attracted fans of all ages.

This phenomenon of older audiences embracing these cute little ponies has reached far and wide. There are conventions dedicated to My Little Pony, like BroNYcon held in New York City, attracting over 4,000 attendees this past June. Fan blog sites like *Equestria Daily* get more than 175,000 visits a day. There are dedicated fans who write fictional stories and even develop video games, like *My Little Pony: Fighting Is Magic.* The fan base of My Little Pony far exceeds just the obvious target of young girls.

Quite frankly, this was a gold mine waiting for some savvy comic publisher to jump on.

IDW Publishing is no stranger to working with Hasbro. Having worked closely with the toy and licensing giant with such properties as *Transformers* and *G.I. Joe*, it seemed inevitable the two would work together to re-create magic. In this case, Friendship is Magic.





"We are thrilled to be working with IDW to bring another of Hasbro's hottest brands to comics," said Michael Kelly, Director of Hasbro's Global Publishing, in a statement IDW released last July. "IDW does a terrific job translating Hasbro's iconic brands and characters to the medium. Match that expertise with the excitement and all-ages appeal of *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic*, and there is no doubt that the time has come for My Little Pony comics."

But was IDW expecting this level of success?

"Well, we knew it was going to be a hit, but I have to admit, we were pretty staggered by the numbers," shared Dirk Wood, IDW's VP of Marketing. "I told some people internally that I expected it to hit at least 50,000 copies which, of course, would be a big number in the current marketplace. But I think we were all pretty amazed when it hit 90,000."

What about the Neigh-sayers? When the original announcement of the success of the

first issue came at the New York Comic Con, some from the publishing world expressed doubt the numbers would remain strong. Was this a one-hit pony?

"The early numbers (for #2) are in, and they're excellent," shared Wood. "But it's really too early to tell just how high it's going to go. There's obviously going to be some shrinkage after a launch of this magnitude, and there was. But, we expect the numbers to be close to what we expected #1 to hit in the first place. So, it's just a runaway success."

My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic fits in nicely with IDW's other all-ages titles, such as *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, *Popeye*, *Dorothy of Oz Prequel*, *Ghostbusters*, and *The Adventures of Augusta Wind*. Is IDW looking to expand its share of the all-ages comics pie?

"I think I can say that it's more of a happy accident than anything," revealed Wood. "Certainly, we want to make comics for people of all ages to enjoy. The truth is, we're aggressively looking for opportunities to make comics of all kinds. While your examples are all true, in that same period of time we've launched a slew of other titles; *Judge Dredd*, *Kiss*, *The Crow*, and a new ongoing *Doctor Who*, just to name a few, that you could hardly call all-ages titles. But we're very proud of the books you mentioned. They've been really successful, and I see no reason to slow down on publishing quality comics for kids. In fact, beyond My Little Pony, I know of another exciting one potentially on the horizon, but it's too early to talk about."

With a hit television series and a following from a group of die-hard fans backing them up, IDW still didn't take any chances with the launch. In an effort to draw attention to the new series, IDW launched with multiple covers; the regular cover of the first issue consists of six equal ratio covers, featuring the "Mane Six" ponies forming interlocking images, a box set collecting the six covers in a slip case, an incentive variant by Stephanie Buscema, and a "subscription variant" by Jill Thompson.

Wood shared the idea for the multiple covers was a result of a "Group Think" at IDW. "We have a weekly meeting about our publishing schedule where we bounce around ideas, and most of the ideas sprung from that. Then of course, we fine tune and work on them with Bobby Curnow, who's editing the title, and ultimately has to be the one to put them all together. But honestly, six covers for the 'Mane Six' characters was kind of a no-brainer, we thought. Each pony has its fans, and we thought it was a perfect opportunity to showcase them all."

Curnow agreed. "From the start, we thought it would be great to have (series artist) Andy Price do six covers featuring each of the main Ponies. The Ponies having one big, interconnected party seemed like a great way to do it, and that was all Andy's idea. We've had some recent success with unique 'subscription variants,' and I'm a huge Jill Thompson fan, so I wanted to get her involved. Same goes for Stephanie Buscema."

In addition, IDW pursued multiple comic shops to offer exclusive covers for individual retailers, with 10 different companies jumping on board. While not *Godzilla #1* numbers, that is 18 different covers for an all-ages title.

"As for the retail exclusive covers, there was some work from our Marketing and Sales department, but mainly it was just the stores themselves coming to us, wanting to get involved," Curnow explained. "They had some great ideas for their covers, and I think our artists, especially Amy Mebberson, who did the lion's share of the exclusives, did a great job."

With the solicitation for *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* appearing to be a mini-series, with its "of 4" description, can future issues be far behind considering the success? Bronies and Pegasisters everywhere can exhale.

"MLP is an ongoing title," Curnow shared. "We'll open with a four-issue story arc that could, in some ways, be considered a mini-series. But there will be a number five issue following number four, starting a new story!"

Will Cook and Price continue to be involved?

"We'll give Katie and Andy a rest after the first four issues, and see a different creative team for two to four issues, so we can maintain our schedule," Curnow explained. "Katie and Andy will definitely return for more adventures, though. They're doing superb work, and I couldn't be happier with them."

Curnow added this sugar cube, "I think it's safe to say, you may see Pony one-shots in 2013!"

However, when it comes down to it, it wasn't all business and marketing decisions for Cook. The writer, mostly known for writing and drawing the webcomic *"Gronk,"* says she wrote the book mainly for herself and artist Andy Price. "I wrote an epic pony adventure with monsters and evil queens and ponies in peril, and that's not what people are expecting," Cook explained at New York Comic Con. "Hopefully, they like it."

At the tune of 100,000 copies sold, it sounds like a safe bet.

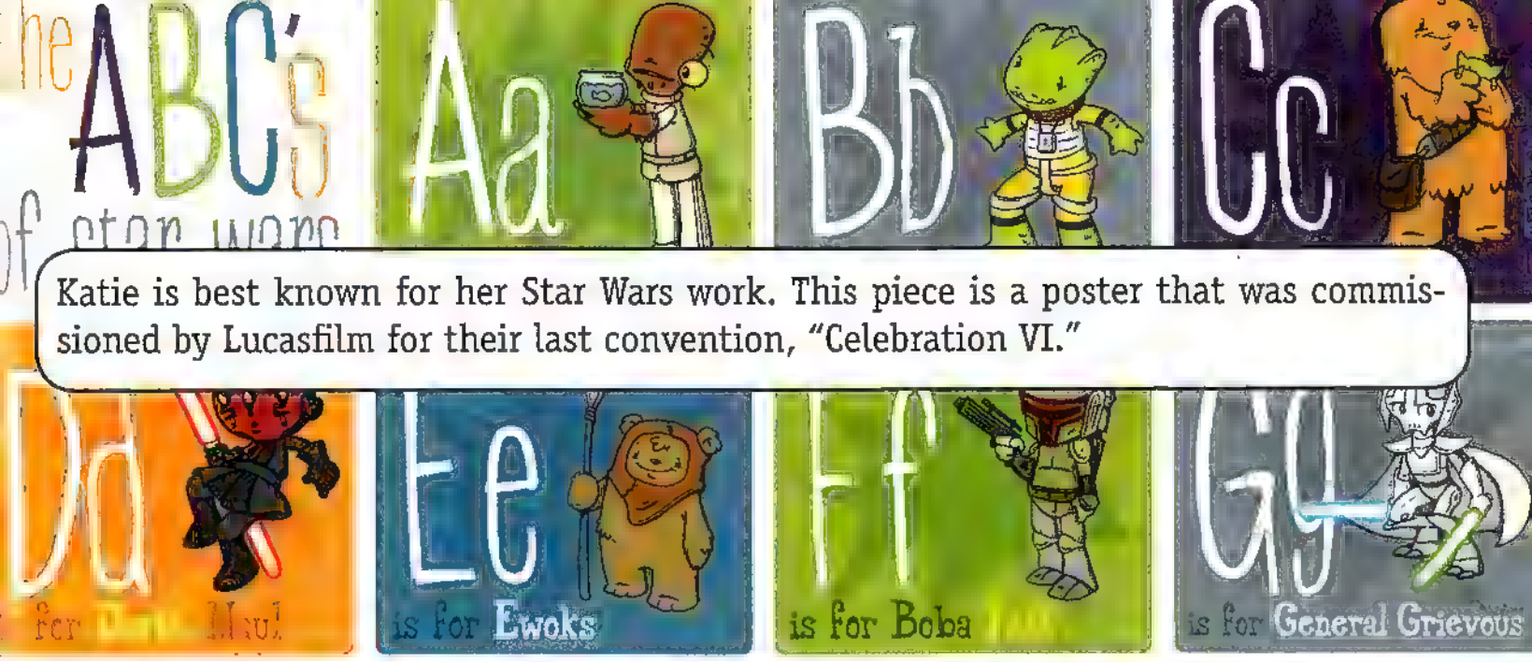
Katie Cook Gallery

by Katie Cook

The world knows her as the writer of IDW's *My Little Pony* and the creator of the webcomic *Gronk* (www.gronkcomic.com). But Katie Cook is much more than that, as can be seen from this colorful inside look at her gallery of projects.

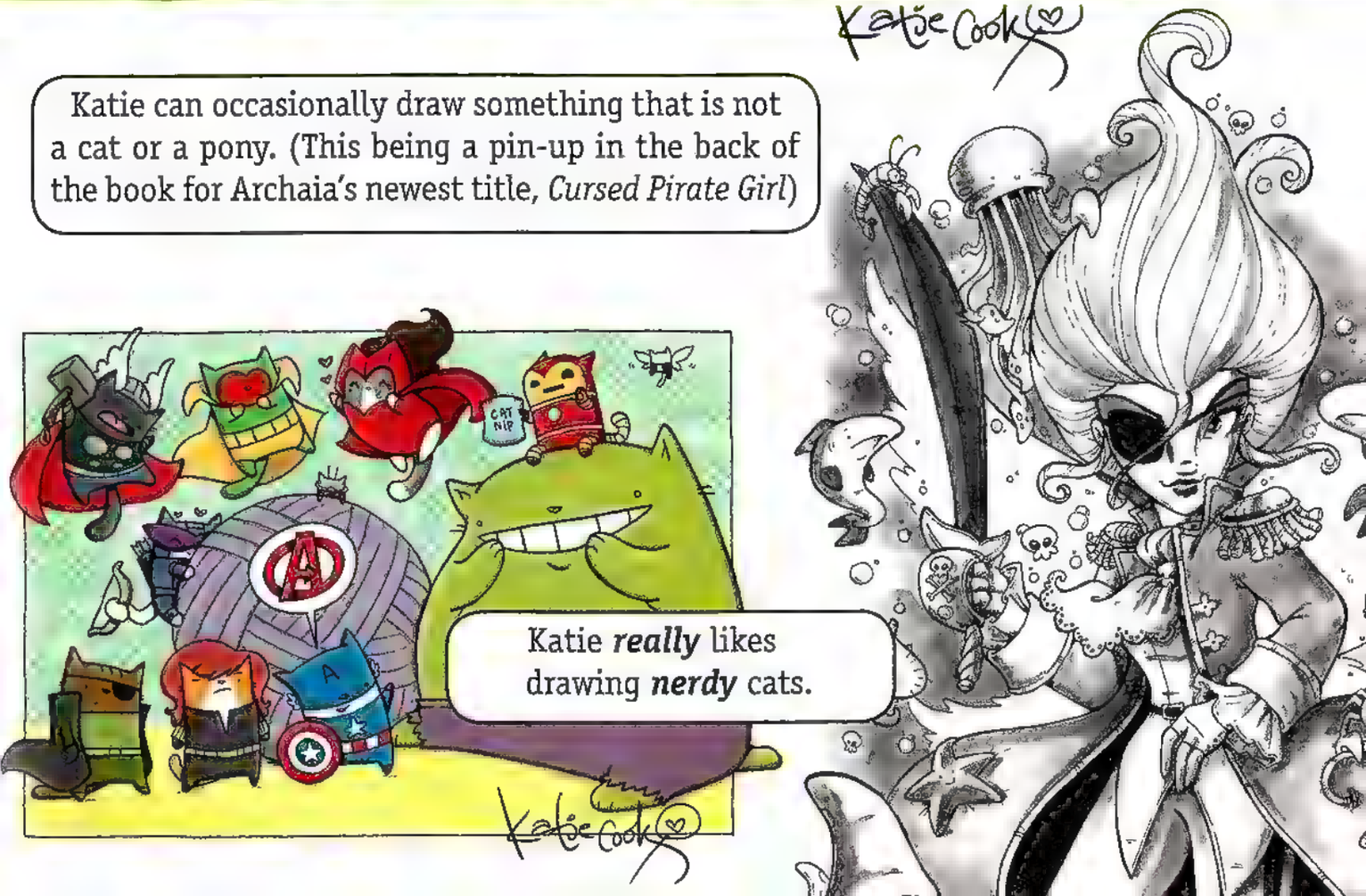
Katie's webcomic *Gronk* updates every Friday.

Background Image: Katie is the writer of the wildly successful launch of the new *"My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic"* comic... and she can draw ponies too!



Katie is best known for her Star Wars work. This piece is a poster that was commissioned by Lucasfilm for their last convention, "Celebration VI."

Katie can occasionally draw something that is not a cat or a pony. (This being a pin-up in the back of the book for Archaia's newest title, *Cursed Pirate Girl*)



COMIC BOOK FEUDS
by Rich Johnston

People understand Hollywood feuds exist, but find it strange similar behaviour might be exhibited in a field as lowly as that of, say, the comic book industry. But people are people, human nature remains, it's just there's less money in comics. Which often makes the behaviour worse, not better. Sometimes a feud goes only one way. Sometimes it's mutual. Sometimes it involves many parties. But they rarely get healed and can often go back decades. Here are some of the more prominent feuds still rumoured to exist. Or, occasionally admitted to in print.

Grant Morrison and Mark Millar

The greatest feuds come from those who were once genuinely good friends. Grant Morrison, basically, adopted Mark Millar after the young comic creator interviewed him for a magazine. They enjoyed each other's company, shared a sense of humour, and began writing together, first for *2000AD* and then for Marvel and DC books such as *Swamp Thing*, *The Flash*, *Aztek* and *Skrull Kill Krew*. But then something happened. Mark Millar began to do quite well on his own, turning lowly gigs such as *Ultimate X-Men* and *The Authority* into respected and successful hits. Then when Morrison filled in for Millar on *The Authority*, when Millar was sick, he found himself without credit. Incensed, Morrison began gossiping behind Millar's back to a few West Coast creators who spread it far and wide. Word got back to Millar and, basically, that was it for the pair.

Morrison moved to Los Angeles, and even moved agents when his work wasn't picked up for films as fast as Millar's was. Morrison has an MBE from the Queen, but Millar is involved at a high level with the Scottish government seeking independence. When asked if he was planning to bump into Mark Millar in Glasgow, Morrison said only if he was going at a hundred miles an hour.

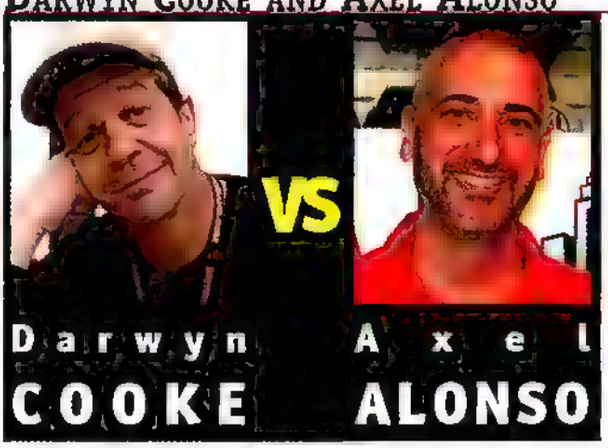
Somehow, Frank Quitely manages to straddle the divide....

The John Byrne Spinning Wheel of Feud

Alan Moore, Erik Larsen, Joe Quesada, Dan DiDio, Brian Bendis, Bill Jemas, Marv Wolfman, Todd McFarlane, Rob Liefeld, Peter David... Ding Ding Ding Ding Ding!

Okay, lucky reader, you've landed on Peter David. There's some history here. David used to work in Marketing at Marvel Comics and Byrne cites a specific example when David handed out a preview to an upcoming issue of *Alpha Flight* that revealed Guardian would die, spoiling his big surprise. David tells it differently, that he'd signed off on the preview with the book's editor, that it was a dream sequence, and retailers only got the idea it revealed Guardian's death when Byrne shouted loudly, "But you've spoiled the death of Guardian," for everyone to hear. And, so began a long grudge, pretty much on David's side. But when Peter David dismissed Byrne's *Hulk* work as a bad comic within comics continuity, that kind of cemented it. We'll spin the wheel again later... for both individuals.

Darwyn Cooke and Axel Alonso



Darwyn Cooke pitches a way to repackage Marvel characters for a younger audience to Axel Alonso. He gets turned down. Then Marvel put together the *Marvel Adventures* line which Cooke believes is, basically, his own pitch rejigged a tiny amount. He's not happy. So, at a comic convention, he takes the opportunity to upturn a full pint glass over Alonso and walks off. It is later referred to as the only DC Exclusive deal signed in beer...

DC Comics and Marvel Comics

Back in the sixties, Stan Lee created a mock rivalry between Marvel and DC, describing the other publisher as the Distinguished Competition. It was playful and silly, even though there was some truth to it, as creators were considered traitors if they crossed from one company to another. But a series of DC/Marvel crossovers and joint projects such as protecting the trademark for "superhero" found common ground between the two on occasion. That disappeared when Bill Jemas and Joe Quesada replaced advertising with public relations and got a lot of shock headlines and commentary by attacking DC, who they relabelled "AOL Comics," and Paul Levitz as a porn star who couldn't get it up. Well that was it. Co-operative projects were pulled by DC, with their Sales VP stating there would be no crossovers again while Jemas and Quesada were employed by Marvel, and war over market share has been fought at every available opportunity. There is now real hatred between the two.

Grant Morrison and Alan Moore

Grant Morrison was a comic book writer from the mid-seventies. However, he only managed to make a successful career from it after Alan Moore, who came after him, broke into DC Comics and paved the way for a number of British writers to make the move over the pond. And so, after interview after interview with people asking him what he thought about Alan Moore, he started to get a bit annoyed. Then there was the time Moore knocked back his attempt to get a *Marvelman* story in *Warrior Magazine*. Add it together, and he rather backlashed in an interview here and a column there against Moore. Moore saw it and kicked off back. Ever since, the two have fired various pot-shots against the other from one interview to another. *Transmetropolitan* fictionalised this best, having a very hairy writer shave himself completely, becoming a very bald writer indeed...

Mark Waid and Dan DiDio

There is one comic book Mark Waid wants to write more than any other: *Superman*. Once upon a time, he was invited to pitch, along with Grant Morrison, Mark Millar, and Tom Peyer, for *Superman*. However, as part of rival editorial groups within DC Comics, this was seen as territorial aggression and then-publisher Paul Levitz told Waid he would never be allowed to write *Superman* or *Action Comics*.

A decade later, as DC reorganised, Dan DiDio fired the then-*Superman* writer James Robinson over personal issues and offered the book to Mark Waid. Two days later, after legal advice, DiDio rehired James Robinson and let Mark Waid go, promising him something better that never arrived. Hiring Bob Harras as DC's Editor-In-Chief didn't help either, given their own feuding from two decades ago. And now, well, you won't see those two sitting down to supper with each other any time soon.

John Byrne and... Ding Ding Ding Ding! Erik Larsen

In another world, they could have been colleagues. Compatriots. Teammates. Both hate Peter David. Both write and draw their comics. Both have worked on *Fantastic Four*, *Spider-Man*, and *Hulk*. Both have guest-starred Hellboy in their comics. Both like to make outrageous statements when defending a point they feel passionate about. Two peas in a pod. Maybe that's the problem. Byrne was dismissive of the Image Comics creators' work, even as he tried to do similar with Dark Horse.

Which led to them dismissing each other and each other's work when the opportunity arose, with Byrne stating he'd met Larsen's background ghost artist on *Savage Dragon* – to be told by Larsen no such person existed.

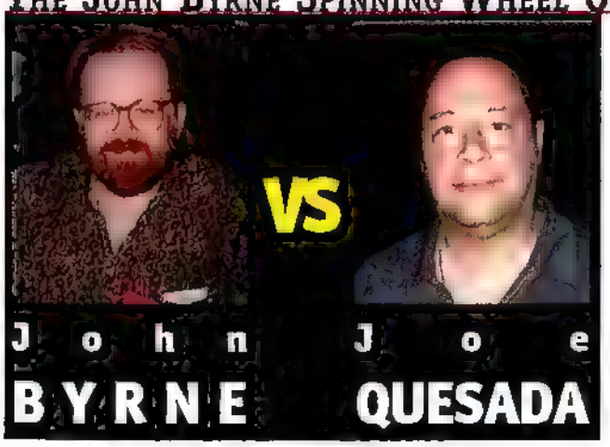
Alan Moore and DC Comics

The Mother of all Feuds. From a meeting with Jenette Kahn and Dave Gibbons discussing possible *Watchmen* prequels, Kahn told them, "Well if you don't do prequels, we'll just do them on our own." This, combined with issues about ownership, censorship, promotion deals, and basically corporate capitalism, saw Alan Moore withdraw his work from the publisher. Not that this stopped DC Comics; they launched Vertigo (a line of comics often modelled on Moore's work), they bought Wildstorm Comics (Moore's superhero publisher at the time), they continued to run plot lines and story arcs based on his old work, they sold what he originally considered to be creator-owned work as movies he disapproves of, and most recently, launched *Before Watchmen*. In addition, there was the *V For Vendetta* movie press conference in which Joel Silver suggested that Moore approved the movie, which saw Moore ask for his name to be removed from the movie, and for his money from such films be donated to the artists rather than him. Moore has compared DC Comics to a stalker ex-girlfriend who won't take no for an answer and keeps coming after you. Yet DC hasn't been fazed.

Robert Kirkman and Marvel Comics

As with Alan Moore, there is none so more dangerous than a publisher spurned. Robert Kirkman was to have been Marvel's new Brian Michael Bendis, although he felt rather harshly treated at the company. Marvel executives never saw it that way – merely toughening him up for high office. They attempted to get him to commercialize that failing comic of his, *The Walking Dead*, as *Marvel Zombies*. As with Bendis, they made the offer to take his entire creator-owned line of comics in house under the Icon imprint. Unlike Bendis, Kirkman declined, and was instead made a partner with Image Comics. *The Walking Dead* went from strength to strength. Indeed, in 2012, *The Walking Dead #100* outsold *Uncanny Avengers #1*. Well, that was that. And Robert Kirkman has been the subject of a number of personal attacks from Marvel staff (whether he knows it or not).

The John Byrne Spinning Wheel Of Feud – Joe Quesada



John Byrne used to work for Marvel. Do you remember? It was a while ago. When Joe Quesada and Bill Jemas came to prominence, he was working on the book *X-Men: The Hidden Years*, a period X-Men comic set in the team's past. For an X-book, it wasn't a great seller. Bill Jemas categorised it, incorrectly, as the worst selling X-Men book of all time. The book, along with a number of other titles, was cancelled due to poor sales and both Jemas and

Quesada wanted Byrne to move onto a new book *X-Men: The End*, promising to back up a lorry load of cash to his house.

Byrne flipped his lid, angered that his preferred comic had been cancelled despite outselling other non-cancelled X-books and there was a rather heated phone call. Reported as full of expletives and hate, Byrne denies this. Quesada has stated he'd only accept Byrne back at Marvel if he apologised, but Byrne doesn't feel he has anything to apologise for and shows no desire to work for Marvel again, anyway. Nevertheless, Marvel continue to republish Byrne's old work and run storylines that are based on his old work...

Pat Lee and Hasbro

There are many ex-Dreamwave employees, staff and freelance, who truly hate Pat Lee for what they see as a deliberate and systematic way to keep himself sitting pretty while stiffing everyone else for thousands of dollars. But none was hit harder than Hasbro, who was owed a million dollars. Even for a company that big, this was still a significant amount and it changed the way they would deal with comic book licenses forever. And today, Pat Lee is still a name forbidden to be mentioned within the company...

Dave Sim and Jeff Smith

Two self-publishers. One old, one new. Jeff Smith's *Bone* was initially previewed in Dave Sim's *Cerebus*, but soon was outselling the senior title. The two rubbed along okay, until a conversation about gender, and Jeff Smith's wife, seemed to separate them. It ended with Jeff Smith threatening to knock Sim's block off, and Sim turning up to a convention with boxing gloves. And that was the end of that chapter. The cast of *Bone* was noticeably absent from Dave Sim's gallery of self-published characters in *Cerebus: Guys*.

Alan Moore and Alan Davis

Once upon a time, these were great co-creators with three classics, *Captain Britain*, *Marvelman*, and *DR & Quinch* under their belts. Then Alan Moore fell out with Marvel and, realising the Marvel UK contracts were very different to the Marvel US contracts, chose not to allow the US to republish their *Captain Britain* strips. This rather stymied Alan Davis who was trying to break into the US at that time. Coupled with Davis never actually allowing Eclipse to reprint his *Marvelman* art (they did anyway), and Moore continuing to write for them, drove a wedge between the two, that has remained until this day. A rare example of the artist choosing to feud with Moore.

Neil Gaiman and Todd McFarlane

This had to go to court to settle it. Repeatedly. Over a couple of decades.

It began when Neil Gaiman was asked to write for *Spawn* by Todd McFarlane. The agreement they had was Gaiman would get as good a deal as he was getting elsewhere. This meant payment for characters created for DC Comics, and a big cheque for the back on an envelope synopsis, as with Tekno Comics. However, as Todd McFarlane published Gaiman's *Angela* series, and used the Angela world in *Spawn*, his mind began to change about the whole deal. He started to believe Gaiman's DC deal wasn't as good as he'd said, and he didn't deserve the extra payments for continued use of Medieval Spawn, Angela, and Cogliostro. He had acquired the Eclipse rights to Miracleman and was offering them to Gaiman in return for the payments owed for Angela et al, to get Gaiman's Miracleman stories republished and finished, through Marvel Comics. The problem was, it turned out that Eclipse had no working rights to Miracleman, as any rights reverted after non-use. He still produced a Miracleman statue and began using the character in his comics. Neil Gaiman sued. Todd McFarlane lost, but the companies that had been sued declared bankruptcy. The fight continued long and hard, until finally McFarlane paid out. During the trial, a number of people jumped on various sides, some out of conviction, some out of convenience, such as John Byrne and Erik Larsen. But we've done them already...

Rob Liefeld and Scott Snyder

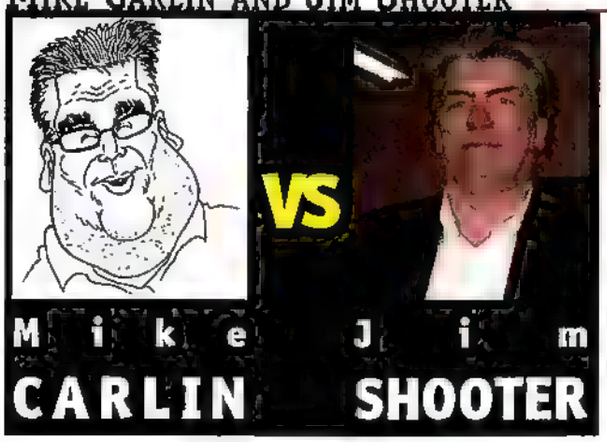
Rob Liefeld is no longer working at DC Comics. Scott Snyder is. When Liefeld left DC in a storm of abusive tweets, Snyder privately messaged him to contradict a few points. Liefeld then publicly tweeted them. Then Liefeld went for Snyder's artistic partner on *Batman*, Greg Capullo, who had also taken over for Liefeld on *X-Force* back in the day. That sent Snyder into his very first feud in comics. Liefeld may have forgotten their spat. Snyder has not.

John Byrne And.... Brian Michael Bendis

Brian Michael Bendis was asked to write the *Ultimate Spider-Man* comic. And horror of horrors, he didn't have Spider-Man in costume in the first issue. Or, the second. Or, the third. This was an anathema to John Byrne who had recently written and drawn *Spider-Man: Year One*, and had delivered a fully costumed Spider-Man by the end of the first issue. He mocked the *Ultimate Spider-Man* sales, pointing out that his version sold much more. And then... something changed. Ultimate Spider-Man put on sales. And put on sales. And put on sales. It became a true hit of Marvel Comics, while the promised *Spider-Man: Year Two*

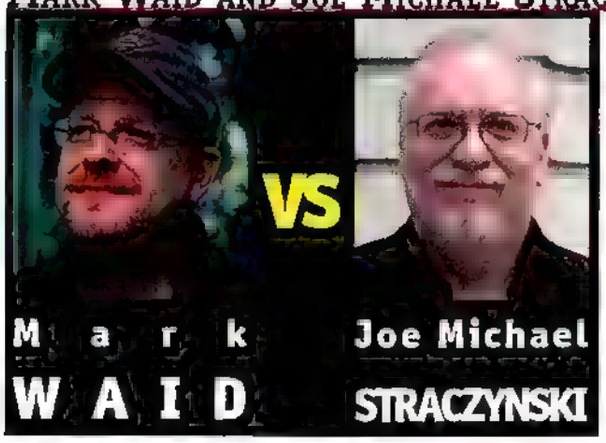
failed to materialise. And so, the scorn piled on, Bendis taking the occasional shot back, such as giving us Byrne The Living Ego, a comic creator with a head the size of a planet. Not much has changed since...

Mike Carlin and Jim Shooter



Jim Shooter has made his fair share of enemies, but some, like Chris Claremont and John Byrne, came around after some time. But not editor Mike Carlin. Working at Marvel under Shooter, it's fair to say they didn't get on and Carlin was amongst those who celebrated when Shooter was deposed as Editor-In-Chief. That feeling was ingrained however, and when Jim Starlin was first approached by Paul Levitz to write *Legion Of Superheroes*, Levitz suddenly told him it was impossible – certain people now at DC objected. Mike Carlin had put his foot down and Levitz had to choose between them. Later, after a series of personal issues, Mike Carlin was demoted and Jim Shooter could return to *Legion*. It didn't last long though...

Mark Waid and Joe Michael Straczynski



Maybe it had something to do with Joe Michael Straczynski writing *Action Comics*. And Mark Waid not being allowed. But Waid has had a serious rage boner for JMS. From his critique of JMS's Superman plans as, "You'll believe a man can walk," to his castigating JMS's comparison of *Amazing Spider-Man* sales under him and the current team as "Dick move, Joe. Flat out, a dick move." There is a fuming hate in Waid's eyes still.

Rich Johnston and Everyone

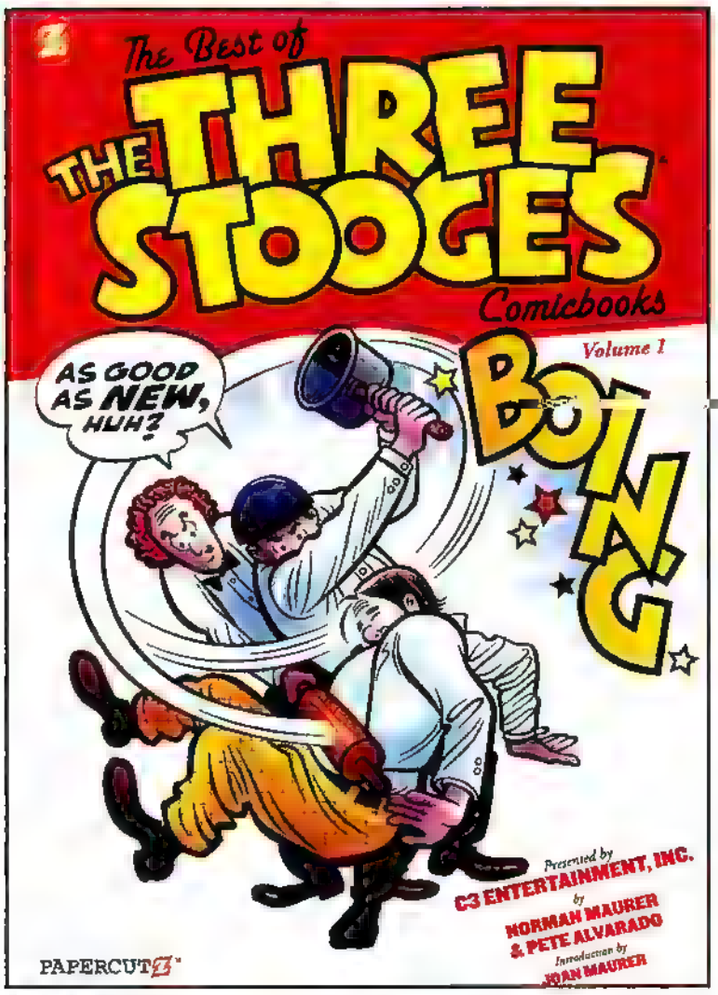
I've had a serious death threat from one person on the list before. I've been gut-punched by one professional not on the list. But, the truth is, many people who profess a dislike of me in public and my habit of reporting rumours and gossip in the comic industry use it as a very believable smokescreen for letting me know all sorts of inside nonsense... some of which I get away with reporting. Indeed, one very prominent "Rich Johnston hater" was responsible for some of the inside dope on the stories above!

Many of the newer names in comics, like Matt Fraction, Josh Fialkov, Rick Remender, or Jeff Lemire, have avoided any kind of public feuds. Possibly more au fait with online etiquette, possibly aware of the consequences of kicking off on Twitter, nevertheless, there's a feeling of peace and calm and everyone-in-it-together. Of course, it may be they are just young and that everyone becomes John Byrne in the end. And certainly there are many in this article who are well on their way...

NYUK, NYUK, NYUK: THE STOOGES ARE BACK IN COMICS

by James Kuhoric

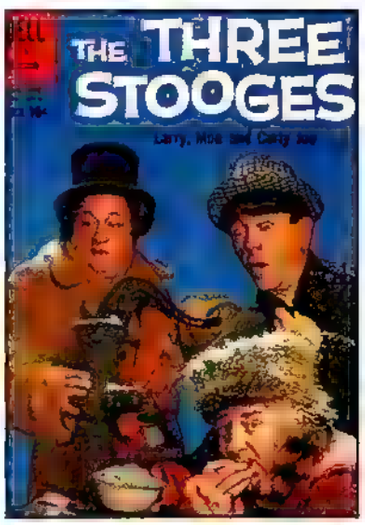
Doink! Whack! Boink! Why I oughta!



Most men have a genetic predisposition to enjoy *The Three Stooges*. We know the gags are just physical humor and that poking someone in the eyes or grabbing their nose with scissors is wrong, but we still laugh at it. In fact, we have a tradition at my house: every New Year's Eve I spend the night leading up to the turning of the year with my sons watching Three Stooges shorts. What can I say... it's a guy thing. But no matter what side of the stooge fence you may personally fall on, you have to admit that Moe, Larry, and Curly (along with Shemp and Curly Joe) were unique showmen who were able to entertain generations of fans for nearly half a century.

What made the Stooges special wasn't just the outrageous slapstick but the brotherly (if somewhat playfully violent) way they looked out for each other. It didn't matter if they were misunderstood cavemen or hapless cowboys, the boys looked out for each other when the chips were down. It was the one of the early societal depictions of "hey, you can't do that to my brother, only I can do that to him," that would appear in television. And behind the slapping, poking, and smacking was a genuine affection that came through each of their personalities. I highly recommend watching one of the Stooges biographies to see the hardships this band of brothers went through to really understand more of what fuelled the films we still enjoy today.

Almost as long as there were Stooges, there have been *Three Stooges* comic books. In fact, top-name creators like Joe Kubert were among the illustrators to portray the trio in those early comics. The folks at Papercutz put together a series of classic Stooge reprint graphic novels and original new comics based on the 2012 Farrelly brothers film. Both series are entertaining and can help you get that much needed Stooge fix, but I really enjoyed the reprint series. With the original printings of the Three Stooges classic comics outside the casual reader's budget, the $19.99 hardcover lets you enjoy tales from the Stooges heyday. Reprinting stories from the late 1940s and up, the collection lovingly presents classic gags, stories, and the original photo covers in a package that is perfect for any collector's bookshelf. Whether you are a longtime fan or someone just discovering the Stooges, *The Best of the Three Stooges Comicbooks Volume 1* is a great family book. Just be sure to explain to junior that you can't pull your sisters tongue with a pair of pliers before you read it together.



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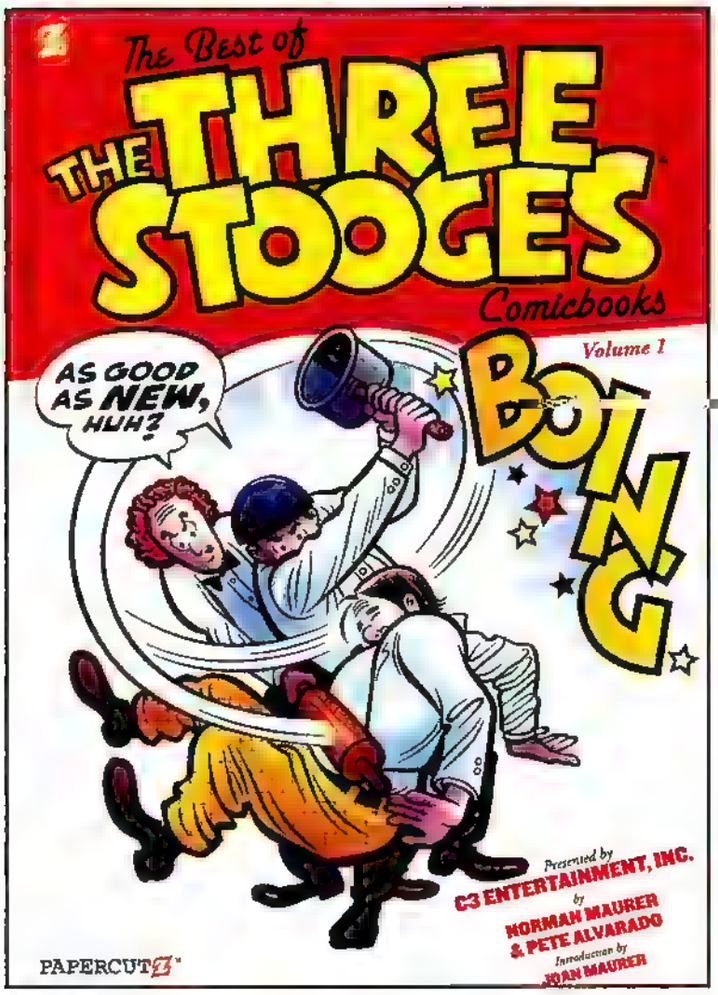

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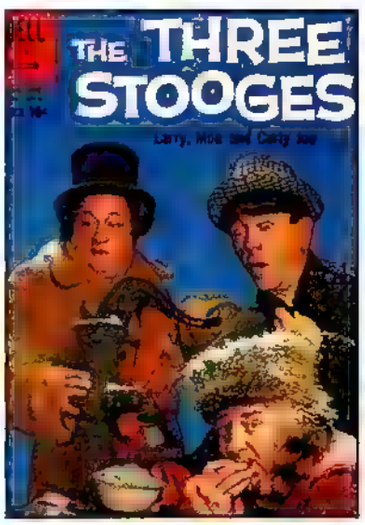
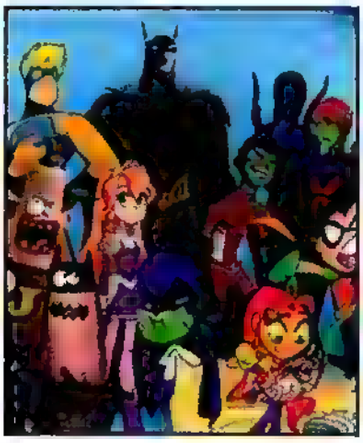


GETTING YOUR ANIMATED SUPER HERO FIX

by Rick Verbanas

If you are old enough to remember like me, cartoons were reserved for Saturday mornings. I recall waking up as a child and racing to the television so I could catch all my favorites. But now, I am watching cartoons with my children. I no longer have to wait for Saturday mornings, as cartoons now have their own dedicated channels. And, the shows I once loved as an 11-year old (*Spider-Man and His Amazing Friends and Incredible Hulk*) are now being mocked via "Marvel Mash-Up," and laughed at by my 11-year old son.

Marvel and DC Comics had a stellar 2011-12, with cartoon programming over the weekends. Will it continue in 2013?

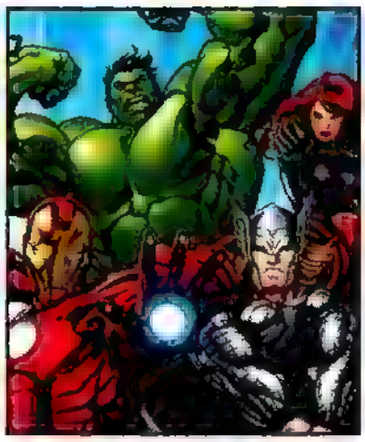


DC NATION

Last year, DC Comics aired *Green Lantern: The Animated Series* and *Young Justice*, with "shorts" airing between the shows. My kids and I both laughed at the clay figure Batman and Superman voiced by British children, and the various animated shorts. *"Animal Man!"*

And like most viewers, we were confused and disappointed when the series suddenly disappeared last October. However, both series are back on Cartoon Network this month, with *Green Lantern: The Animated Series* starting Saturday mornings at 10 ET, followed by *Young Justice: Invasion* at 10:30.

Also airing in 2013 will be *Beware The Batman*, a new computer-animated series, co-starring a gun-wielding Alfred and sword-flying Katana. DC seems to be keeping very mysterious on this series and fans eagerly await its debut this spring.



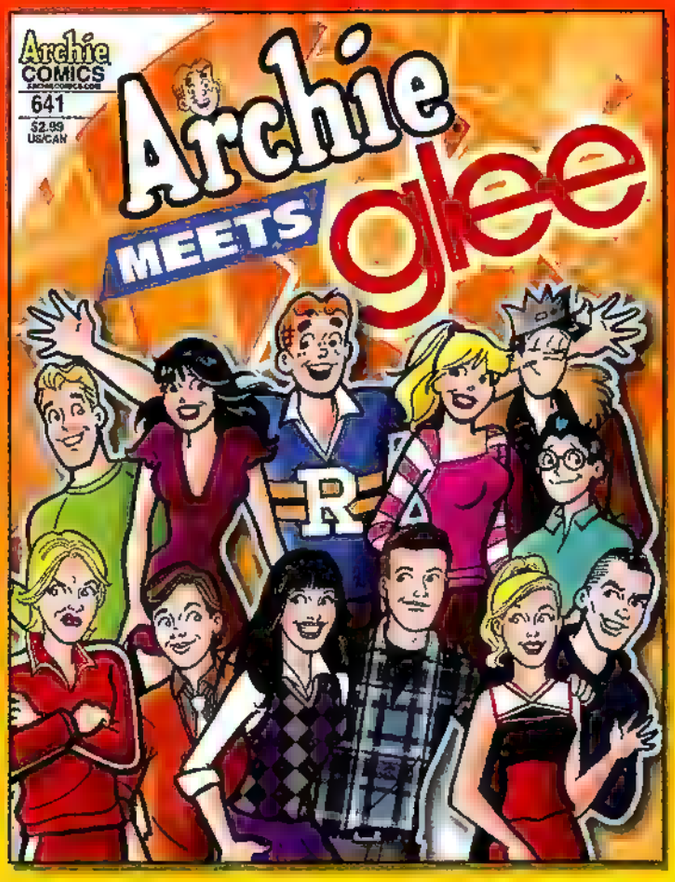
MARVEL UNIVERSE

In 2012, Disney XD aired *Ultimate Spider-Man*, followed by *The Avengers: Earth's Mightiest Heroes*. Like DC, they included shorts between cartoons. My kids and I really enjoyed both animated series. I have to admit, the teaming of Spider-Man with teenaged versions of other superheroes seemed a little hokey, but can someone who used to love Spidey hanging with Ice Man and Firestar really judge? *Ultimate Spider-Man* will be back with new episodes this summer.

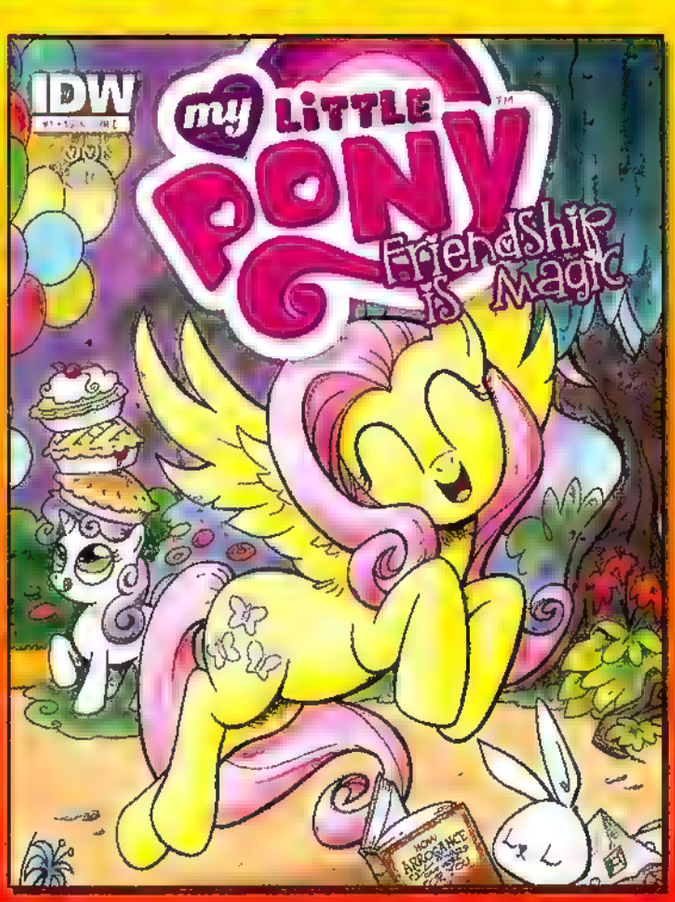
For long-time comic fans, the best was *The Avengers: Earth's Mightiest Heroes* cartoon. They covered classic and contemporary stories like those featuring Ultron and Secret Invasion. Alas, the series ended and will be replaced this summer with Marvel's *Avengers Assemble*. The new series promises to stick closer to movie continuity, starring the characters from the movie, as well as The Falcon.

Also debuting this summer will be *Hulk and the Agents of S.M.A.S.H.*, starring Hulk with his cousin, She-Hulk, as well as Red Hulk, Skaar, etc. While the concept doesn't appeal to me, I do highly respect the men working on the series; Emmy Award-winning Paul Dini (*Batman: The Animated Series*) and Henry Gilroy (*Star Wars: The Clone Wars*).

While there are many other cartoons based on comic books worthy of note, I like how DC and Marvel have brought back the thrill of watching cartoons on weekend mornings. And in another 25-30 years, I will probably be watching cartoons with my grandkids as they do a mash-up mocking Spidey and his friends – although this time around it will be the teenage Power Man and Iron Fist.



HEY PARENTS, COMICS!



HEY PARENTS, COMICS!
by James Kuhoric

American comic books have always had the stigma of being aimed at kids. It's been that way in public perception since the beginning, regardless of the darker and increasingly mature trending titles that have moved to the forefront in the past thirty years. More and more, the late 20th and early 21st centuries were proving comics really weren't for kids at all. When traditionally younger skewing characters like Spider-Man and Batman have books that deal with topics which are reserved for cable programs, you have to acquiesce even these stalwarts have in general moved away from younger readers.

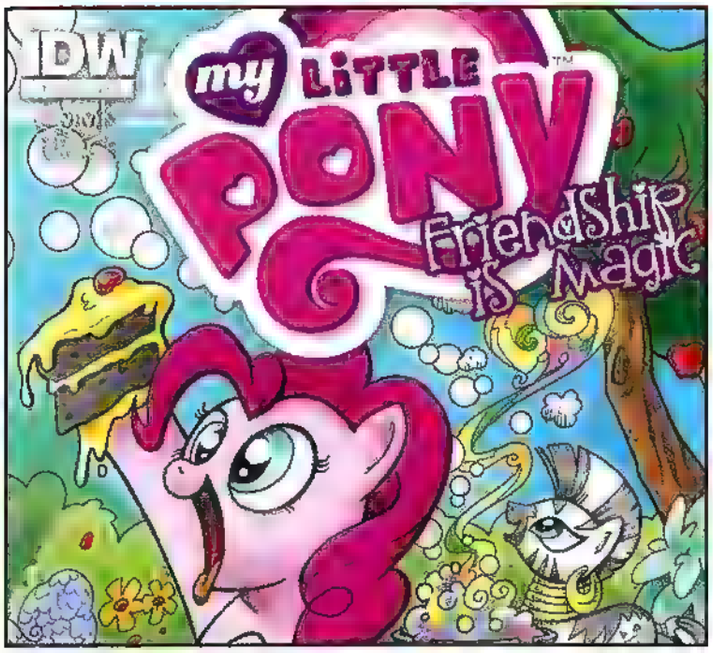
But the past few years have brought in new players to the all-ages market and with them has come a wave of comics that are not only kid-friendly but are designed to be enjoyable for a wide range of readers. Titles like *Adventure Time, Peanuts, My Little Pony, Spongebob,* and *Strawberry Shortcake* have widened the opportunities for new generations of readers to come in and enjoy books that are not written down to them, but instead are clever and wry on multiple levels. Their recognizably is a strength that opens the door for parents to pass the item on to their children and bridges the age gap to develop multi-generational comic book reading families. This is something we've desperately needed in comics for a long time. And some publishers are finding the right editorial package to reach children who are growing up in an age of daily digital advances. With a myriad of choices to take up their entertainment dollars, all of which are flashy and filled with electronic goodness, it takes something special to get children excited about the sequential art medium. This article attempts to give you a few target titles which comic reading parents can use to read with their children and to enjoy as we welcome new generations to the hobby.

Adventure Time / Bravest Warriors
Recommended age 9+

BOOM! has been developing a line that really does celebrate children's editorial like no other. *Adventure Time* and their new title *Bravest Warriors* are based on the multi-media sensation cartoons from Cartoon Network. Creator Pendleton Ward has developed a mythology fans of all ages love and embrace. The series are funny, clever, and manage to capture the imagination of pretty much everyone that watches it. These comics are perfect for a young reader because you can watch the cartoon with your children and then read the comics together. Adding funny voices as you read the captions only helps if your children are of early grade school age.

My Little Pony / Strawberry Shortcake

Recommended age 5+

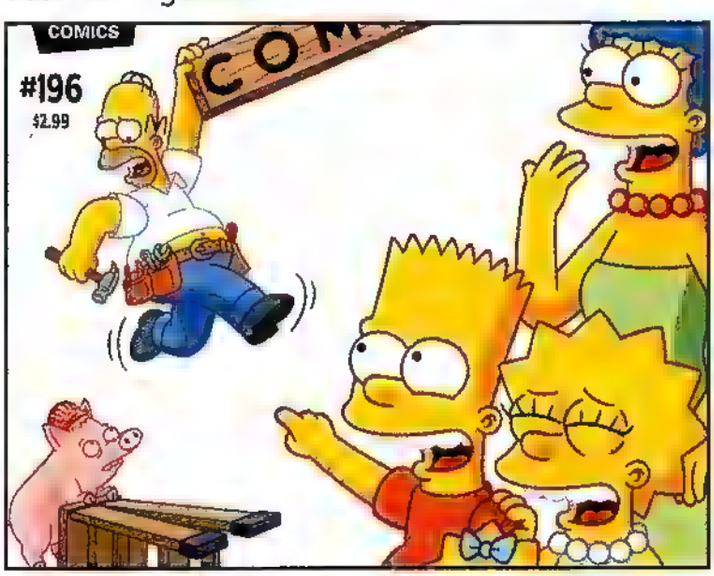


IDW is known for quality licensed comics, but their newest title, *My Little Pony*, is a full-fledged phenomenon. They found the right creative team at the right time for this book and the result is something truly special. Parents can enjoy a self-aware comic that delivers everything kids want in their magic pony-fiction and still gives you a fun story to read. And likewise, Ape Entertainment has brought the fondly remembered *Strawberry Shortcake* back to comics. The book features all of your favorite sweet smelling characters from the 80s in a bright new series for today's children. It is impossible to read these two books without smiling. And for younger female readers, these comics are a great entry point into a very diverse medium they can enjoy for life.

Spongebob/Simpsons/Futurama

Recommended age 7+ (Spongebob) & age 11+ (Simpsons/Futurama)

All three Bongo titles, *Spongebob Squarepants*, *The Simpsons*, and *Futurama* are comics that are perfect for kids in grades 2 – 6 (and up). The topics in these books start to get a little more mature but, generally, are over the heads of the younger audience or just implied so more sophisticated readers understand them. The three books do a great job of tying in some of the best and longest running animated television features into the printed world. How many properties are there that parents can say they watched as a child that are still relevant and have kids today watching? The nostalgia factor alone brings an extra level of interaction as parent and child enjoy these stories together.



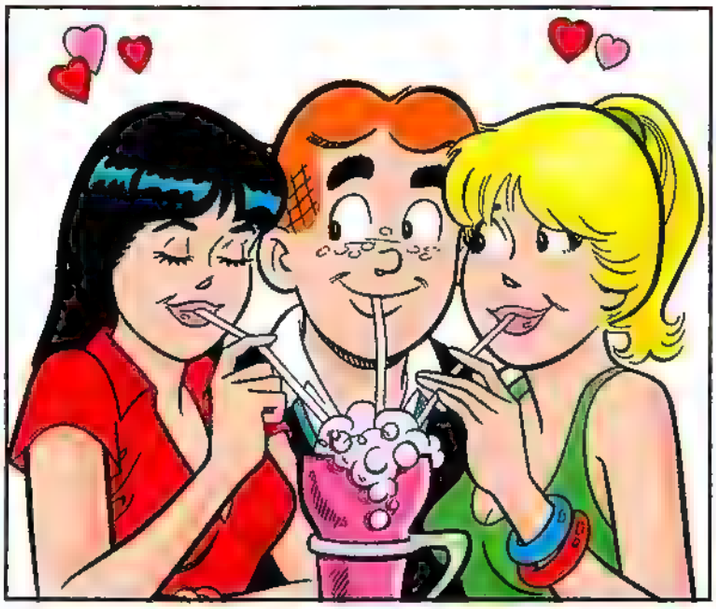
Peanuts/Garfield/Fraggle Rock/Muppets

Recommended age 5+

These four nostalgic favorites are books that can be shared with multiple generations within the family. For the grandparent who read comics to their children and now their grandchildren, we present these timeless classics revitalized for today's readers. From Charles M. Shultz's and Jim Davis' classic strips come the new adventures of the Peanuts gang and Garfield. Lovingly written and illustrated, these comics are the perfect opportunity to share something that crosses generational boundaries. Similarly, for the Henson fans, *Fraggle Rock* and the *Muppets* comics from Archaia and Marvel bring some of the most beloved television critters new life in comics. These properties open up a world of classic entertainment for kids to experience and to share.

Archie/Sonic the Hedgehog/New Crusaders

Recommended age 7+: *Specific Sensitive Topic Issues at Parent's Discretion*



Archie comics have been known for safe family reading since the 1940s. Riverdale has changed a lot since the gang first debuted. New friends and crazy adventures highlight the incredible revival that has made Archie, Jughead, Bettie, and Veronica more relevant then ever.

Recently the Riverdale crew has met the cast of *Glee* and rocked out with KISS. Their comics cover topics from marriage to video games to the gay and lesbian lifestyle. Truth be told, they are more topical than many other contemporary titles. But amidst the controversy of some of the topics themselves come the comics, which are enjoyable and do not preach an agenda other than acceptance. Every parent must decide for themselves how and when to cover sensitive topics with their children. But you can feel confident knowing that they are handled with tact and compassion coming from Archie. And don't lose sight of their *Sonic* series and the *New Crusaders* which both are based on long standing and accessible kids' properties.

The age recommendations are suggestions only and not the official individual publishers or licensees rating. They are meant as a guide to assist parents in making decisions, however each parent should look over the comics and make their own judgments before sharing with children. Nothing beats reading comics with your kids!

HENSON NOW AND THEN
by Brendon Connelly

For Jim Henson fans, 2013 will be their Rainbow Connection, as all three of Henson's most treasured worlds will be returning. The Muppets will be up-ending Europe for their new feature film, the Fraggles will be celebrating the 30th anniversary of their enchanted, enchanting Rock, and a new prequel to the *Dark Crystal* will tell us how the crystal was cracked.

For a Henson nut like me, it promises to be a very good year. But should I be looking forward to all these projects? Are they all in good standing? Let's take a look at them, one by one.

THE MUPPETS

Disney has yet to announce the official title for their next Muppet movie, and the working title of *The Muppets 2* seems to miss the point. This isn't just a follow up to 2010's movie, it's the latest in a long line of shows and capers and... er... Christmas Carols.

Perhaps they're keeping the title under wraps because it reveals a little about the plot. At press time, all we know is that the Muppets will be gallivanting around Europe, pursued by an Interpol Agent played by Christoph Waltz. There are two other new human leads, one male and one female, and rumours say we can expect a wedding. You can bank on this, though: misunderstandings and farce will ensue.

This film is once again being directed by James Bobin and co-written by Bobin and Nick Stoller. Both of them worked on the last film, as did Bret McKenzie, half of the Conchords and an Oscar winner for the superb *Man or Muppet*. He has been busy writing more songs for this new installment.

But despite being the driving force behind the Muppet revival, Jason Segal has opted out, for reasons unknown. He will be missed.

On the upside, Walter has decided to stay on and he'll now be a fully-fledged member of the Muppet troupe. Younger or new viewers might find it odd to see Walter take a backseat to Kermit this time around, but I'm not complaining. The filmmakers foregrounding my all-time favourite actor,

amphibian or otherwise, suits me just fine. Will this be his shot at Awards Season glory? The film is set for release towards the end of the year with all of the other contenders, so fingers crossed, eh?

I'm not worried about this film at all. On the evidence of 2010's *The Muppets*, Henson's characters are in very safe hands.

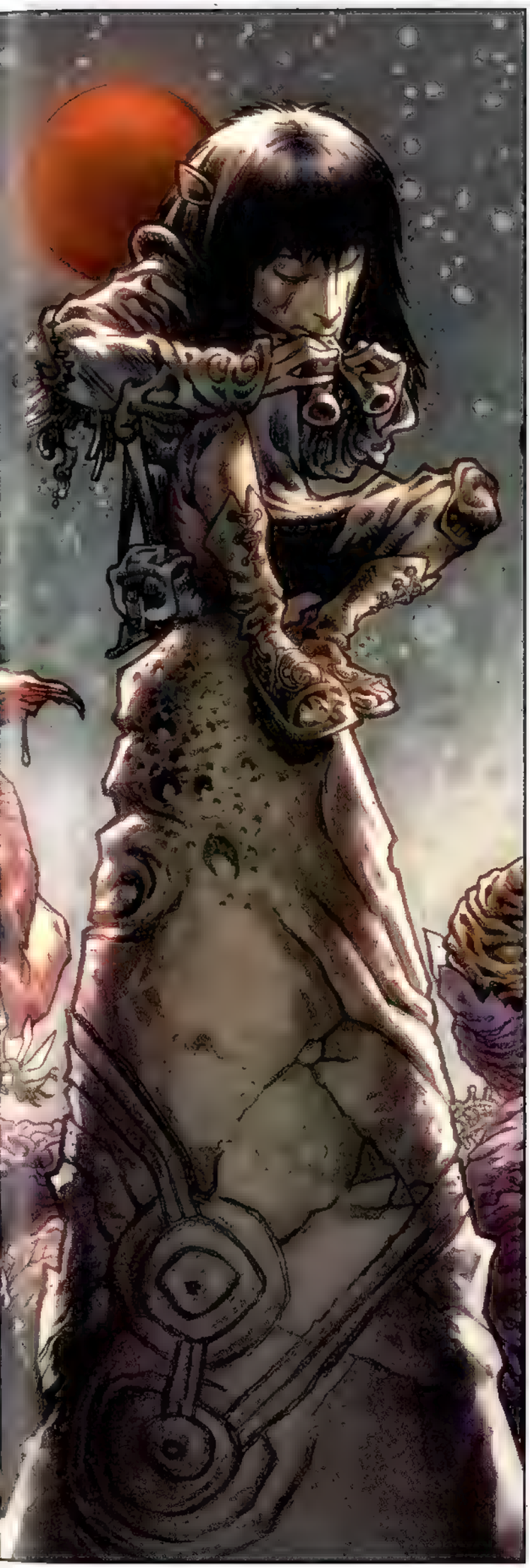
FRAGGLE ROCK

To mark the 30th anniversary of the Fraggles, the entire series is going to be reissued on DVD with new special features. We don't know what the supplements will be as yet, but the Henson archive is deep, and there's a lot buried in there that's yet to become public.

There is also a movie in the works, but progress has been pretty slow. While it could go into production in 2013, I'd expect the most we could possibly see of it this year is a trailer. For the longest time, the movie rights were sitting with the Weinsteins, but that deal thankfully lapsed and it's now the Jim Henson Company in charge. In 2012, they set Jim Byrkit and Alex Manugian, both of whom worked on *Rango*, to do a draft but, for six months at least, there's been no word. It's the anniversary in April, so I'm keeping my fingers crossed for a well-timed announcement.

But I don't think the Fraggles are going to hide away during their big birthday celebrations. There are oodles of merchandising tie-ins coming, including a CD of cover versions of Fraggle songs, much like *The Green Album* that preceded the last Muppet movie. The CD's message is "Fraggles are hip," and it's going to be delivered three minutes at a time.

And while I don't think we'll be seeing new Fraggle adventures in 2013, we will see the return of their diminutive Rockmates, the Doozers, those little green guys in hardhats. A new CG animated series called *Doozers* aimed at a pre-school audience will premiere before the year is out. Well, a pre-school audience and me.



DARK CRYSTAL

You'll have a much shorter wait for new *Dark Crystal* as Archaia are publishing the second volume of their prequel graphic novel *Creation Myths* round about now. If you're cheekily reading this in your local comic shop, you may only be feet away from a copy - and now I've told you this, just seconds from having a quick flick through it, I'd bet.

Written by Josh Dysart and illustrated by Alex Sheikman and Lizzy John, *Creation Myths* was created in collaboration with the Hensons and Bryan Froud, the original creature and character designer on both *Dark Crystal* and *Labyrinth*. At the end of this article you can see some new portraits by Froud, portraying Kel the Gelfling, Aughra and, a controversial new character, Aughra's son, Raunip. These portraits are also in the volume, along with an afterword by David Odell, screenwriter of the original film.

There was no indication in the original film that Aughra had a child, and so fans are looking to this story to explain Raunip's unexpected existence away, even while they're just meeting him for the first time. I can be a little more patient.

The story of *Creation Myths*, as the title suggests, takes us back to the time when the Skekses and Mystics were bound together as one species, the Urskeks, and before the cracking of the crystal. We're going back to the cataclysm that sets in motion the whole storyline of the original movie.

I spoke to Archaia's Stephen Christy about the responsibility of building on Jim's foundations: "We've been tasked with showing one of the most important parts of the *Dark Crystal* mythos, the cracking of the crystal itself, and in doing so expanding the original canon created by Jim, Frank Oz, Brian Froud and David Odell all those years ago.

This book shows the first appearance of the Skeksis and the Mystics, and we spent a lot of time working with the Henson

Company and Brian Froud to get the look of these characters right."

But not only 'right,' because *Creation Myths* has allowed for action beyond the realms of the original film. These are fitter, more vigorous versions of the characters we know: "The Skeksis and Mystics are younger here, strong and in their prime," explained Christy. "And we have an incredibly dramatic face-off where we've been able to take these old and decrepit characters in the movie and show them fighting each other, moving and acting in a physical way that was never possible with the original puppets."

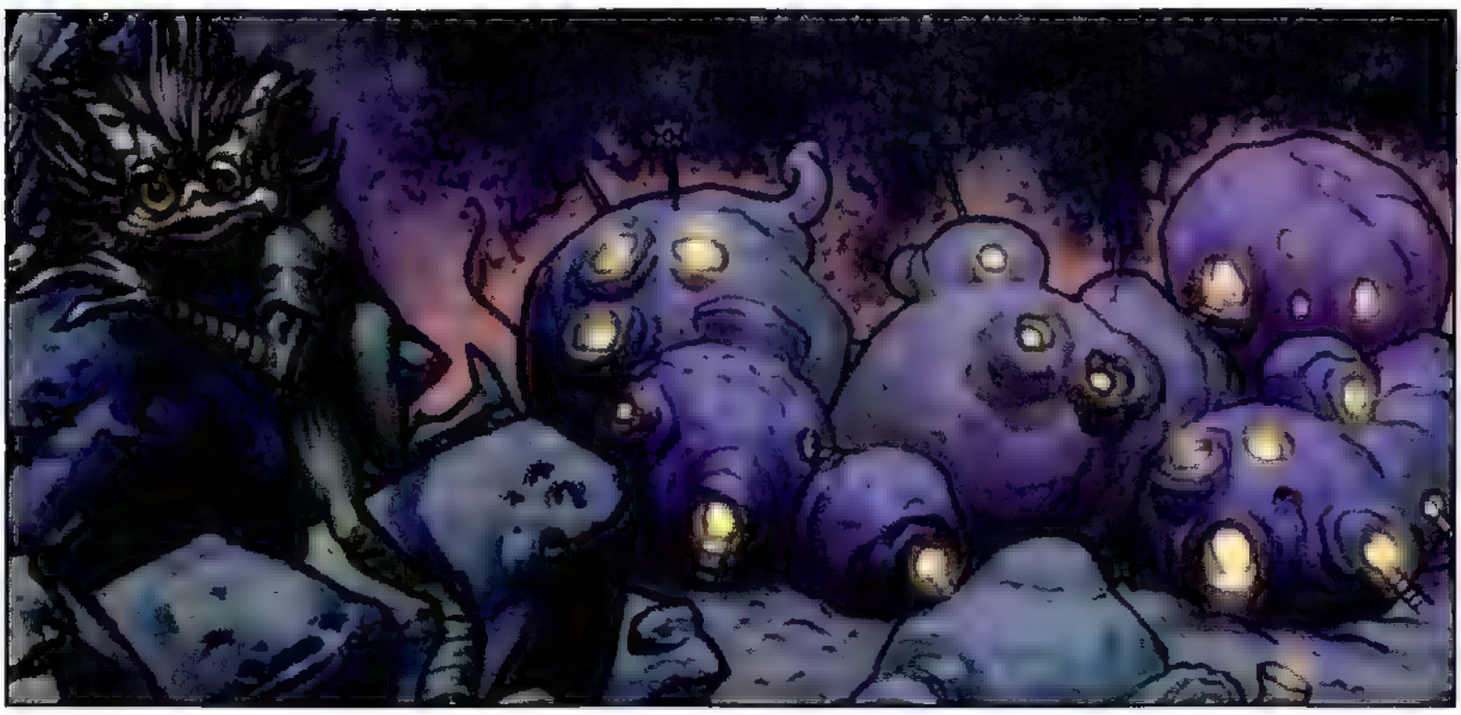
In his afterward, David Odell recounts a conversation with Jim about the limitations of his creations: "When I first started working with him, I asked him what puppets could do. He launched into a great pep talk. 'We can do anything with puppets,' he said. 'The possibilities are limitless. They can swim, they can fly, they can do karate, they can eat things...' Then he paused, and started to chuckle. 'They can do anything, except walk and talk.' It was true. Walking consisted of the puppeteer jiggling his arm up and down while the puppet moved across the stage. Talking consisted of flapping the puppet's lips open and shut in a rough approximation of the syllables of the dialogue. To me, that conversation symbolizes a thing about Jim's character: he was wildly enthusiastic and tended to ignore obstacles, thinking there was always a work-around. At the same time, he was very practical and realistic and able to laugh at his excessive flights of fancy."

So the ambition with *Creation Myths* is to go beyond the original *Dark Crystal*. Far from this being a slight on the original work, I think it demonstrates how Archaia are respecting it. Would we rather they somehow try to fall short on purpose? Doing the best they can is the only goal they should have.

Hopefully the finished book lives up to the ambition. Christy certainly convinced me they were approaching the work thoughtfully.

"The *Dark Crystal* is about mythmaking... About creation, destruction, and spiritual revelation. I'm so happy how Josh Dysart, Alex, Lizzy, and Brian captured this. I think we've made something pretty epic for a 'licensed comic.' I hope we've done Jim Henson proud."

With The *Dark Crystal*, *Fraggle Rock* and *The Muppets* all living on, there are a lot of people hard at work now, all hoping to make Jim proud. We'll be able to see if they've succeeded with a pretty simple test: just look at the audiences, and keep an eye out for laughter... or tears.



Dark Crystal portraits by Bryan Froud

Clockwise from top right: Kel the Gelfling, Aughra and, a controversial new character, Aughra's son, Raunip.

2013 Highlights

By Rich Johnston

2013 HIGHLIGHTS
by Rich Johnston

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IMAGE SOLUTION

Image Comics has undergone a change in the way they deal with a number of projects. Famously a back end publisher of creator owned works for a fixed fee, where creators get the profits after the book has come out, they have of late attracted better known creators by offering page rates more widely than before. Which means creators can get paid as they are going along, like a traditional comics publisher, but also share in the book's success. And as a result, this year will not just see new books from new creators, but more books from big names as well.

These include *Sex Criminals* by Matt Fraction and Chip Zdarsky, *Satellite Sam* by Fraction and Howard Chaykin, Chaykin's *Midnight Soul*, Kieron Gillen and Jamie McKelvie's *Phonogram: Immaterial Girl*, Kieron Gillen and Ryan Kelly's *Three*, Ales Kot's *The Surface* and *Zero*, Jim McCann and Janet Lee's *Lost Vegas*, James Asmus' *The End Times of Btam and Ben*, Jonathan Hickman and Nick Dragotta's East of West, Kelly Sue DeConnick and Emma Rios' *Pretty Deadly*, and Hickman's *Feel Better* Now original graphic novel amongst, well, many others.

They include the Si Spurrier / Antonio Fuso comic *Why are the Weavers* for sometime in the year. We can get a first a look at that somewhere on this page as well.

This also looks like it will be the home for Rufus Dayglo's new creator-owned series, *Solid Gold Death Mask*, out next year. One of the Image Comics employees already has a tattoo of the lead character, Bang Tidy, on her. In many ways, this looks like Rufus' own version of *Tank Girl*, if he was allowed to do whatever he wanted with her, and own her in the process.

And B Clay Moore will bring his sporadic Image series *Hawaiian Dick* to a close with *Aloha, Hawaiian Dick*, with art by Jacob Wyatt.

In terms of publishing off the wall projects from big names, Image Comics have dramatically taken over DC Vertigo's position. Though Vertigo haven't exactly gone away in 2013...

ULTRON DAYS

Marvel is finally getting round to publishing *Age of Ultron*. It was meant to be published in 2012, but then Marvel decided to expand *Schism* into *Avengers Vs X-Men* by bringing in the Avengers. Which was handy, as Bryan Hitch hadn't quite finished the art. And then he did, but Marvel had to wait until now to get all their ducks in a row to publish it. So, even though Bryan Hitch has left Marvel and is pursuing his own projects (even turning down *Superman/Batman* with Brad Meltzer), his name will be on of Marvel's biggest project of the year.

I WILL SHOW YOU MONEY IN A HANDFUL OF DUST

Sandman Year Zero will be a massive comic for DC, and will likely top the charts. Neil Gaiman's audience has just grown and grown and *Sandman* has remained a solid seller for DC Comics. This prequel project does have an interesting history, though.

Originally proposed a few years ago, Neil Gaiman previously hinted he had an idea for what Dream was up to when he was captured in *Sandman #1*. And that this could form a last Sandman story to tell. DC Comics approached him to make that happen, but according to Gaiman, only offered him the kind of contract he was offered back in the eighties, before he was "Neil Gaiman TM." And they weren't interested in budging. He offered an alternate to make up the difference by asking for an increased royalty on the existing *Sandman* collections, but still got no joy. So he went off and wrote the million-selling Graveyard Book.

Then, DC underwent a revolution in structure and the word came down to exploit their trademarks as best they could. People were paid a small fortune to work on *Before Watchmen*, so getting a better deal for Neil to write *Sandman Zero* suddenly wasn't that hard.

Series artist JH Williams III also will see DC reprint the collection of the Alan Moore ABC series he drew, *Promethea*, in the way it always should have been. The book was drawn and designed with a series of double page spread layouts, a style he has continued in *Batwoman*. It was originally proposed that the oversized hardcover "Absolute" version of the comic would be printed sideways; a landscape format massive all-in-one hardcover in which no art from those double page spreads would disappear in the binding. Proposed by Wildstorm editor-in-chief and originator of the Absolute format, Scott Dunbier, before he was fired over the *League of Extraordinary Gentlemen: Black Dossier*

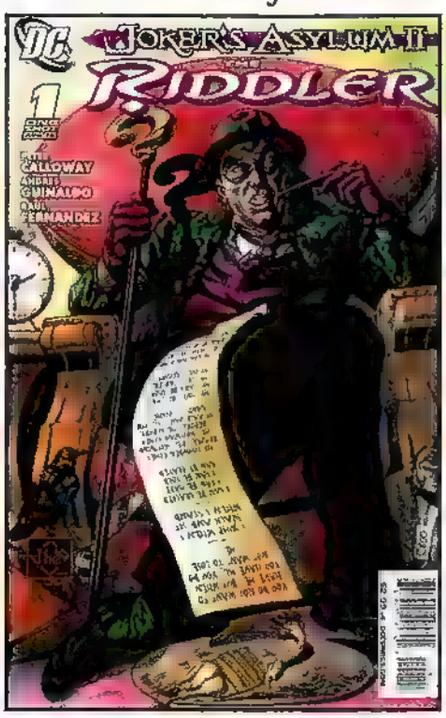
débâcle, DC Comics have gone back to his original plans for the collection.

Vertigo are also reviving their science fiction line, with *Saucer Country* about to be joined by new books by Scott Snyder and Jeff Lemire, namely *The Wake* and *Trillium*.

RIDDLE ME THIS

Neil Gaiman hasn't written many DC superhero comics, but he did once write a Batman Riddler story.

In Batman... after having a massive Joker story in *Death of the Family*, Bleeding Cool has learnt that the Bat books switch attention to another of the classic rogues gallery, The Riddler.



And the Riddler is back in 2013, as Scott Snyder and Greg Capullo's *Batman* comic reveals more 'early days' of Bruce Wayne's Batman and his first encounter with the man-of-question-marks.

Scott Snyder has been boasting it will be his boldest story on the title yet. So, basically, if you liked *Court of the Owls*, and *Death of the Family*, then it's time to crack open the Riddler cosplay suit for 2013.

Talking of cosplay, is anyone going to dress up as the godly form that Alan Moore took in his film, *Jimmy's End*? Seriously, I would give out prizes to people who send in proof of their efforts.

And also talking of DC and Alan Moore, keeping Gene Ha from finishing *Top Ten Season Two* with Zander Cannon will be *Phantom Stranger*. Gene will be the next artist on that title, after Brent Anderson leaves.

BRING ON THE BAD GUYS

As well as Jim Lee and Scott Snyder's *Man of Steel* starting this year, DC Comics is also launching what we've nicknamed "Villain Month," which will see the return of a number of big name bad guys to the New 52 Universe, going up against heroes they may not have fought before (with notable exceptions such as Riddler in Batman), Prankster and Nightwing, Ventriloquist and Batgirl, that sort of thing.

There are a lot of creators jumping off books (or joining new ones) around that time as well, as Scott Snyder leaves *Swamp Thing*, Grant Morrison leaves *Action Comics*, Duane Swierczynski leaves *Birds of Prey* and more. We might expect a bunch of cancellations and new books around the time of the Villains themed crossover as well.

IRON FLAKES

And since we will have *Iron Man 3* out, expect a lot of *Extremis* everywhere. We've just had a load of it in the monthly series, but since the new movie is based in part on the Ellis/Granov arc, expect to see Marvel push both that arc and the Gillen/Land sequel all around the shop. Anything to try and turn valuable Hollywood attention into sold comics.

We've also seen how the current Iron Man comic is developing the character to join the *Guardians of the Galaxy* – Marvel's next new movie project. There has been a lot of interest in the Guardians as a result of that announcement, and Marvel does like to link its attractive media properties together if it can.

AFTER 100 BULLETS

We know that Grant Morrison turned down a new *Invisibles* series for Vertigo's 20th Anniversary in

WALKING MAX

Muti-Million-selling zombie king, Max Brooks, is writing a new 10 issue series for Avatar, that sees his unique take on zombies come up against vampires, scheduled

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UNDERWATER LOVE

The return of Abe Sapien will come at the hands of Mike Mignola and Scott Allie writing a new series, with art from Sebastian Fiumara and Max Fiumara, treating the Hellboy character in the manner of Frankenstein's Monster, from Dark Horse.

New series from the black mare includes a new ongoing *Mass Effect* series in June written entirely by Mac Walters for the first time. Also coming: a new *Dragon Age* series, *Until We Sleep!*, written by David Gaider and a new comic, *Last of Us*, drawn by Faith Erin Hicks. And, you may see a little more *Many Murders Of Miss Cranbourne* drawn by Simon Rohrmuller and written by, well, me.

LORD OF THE PREVIEWS

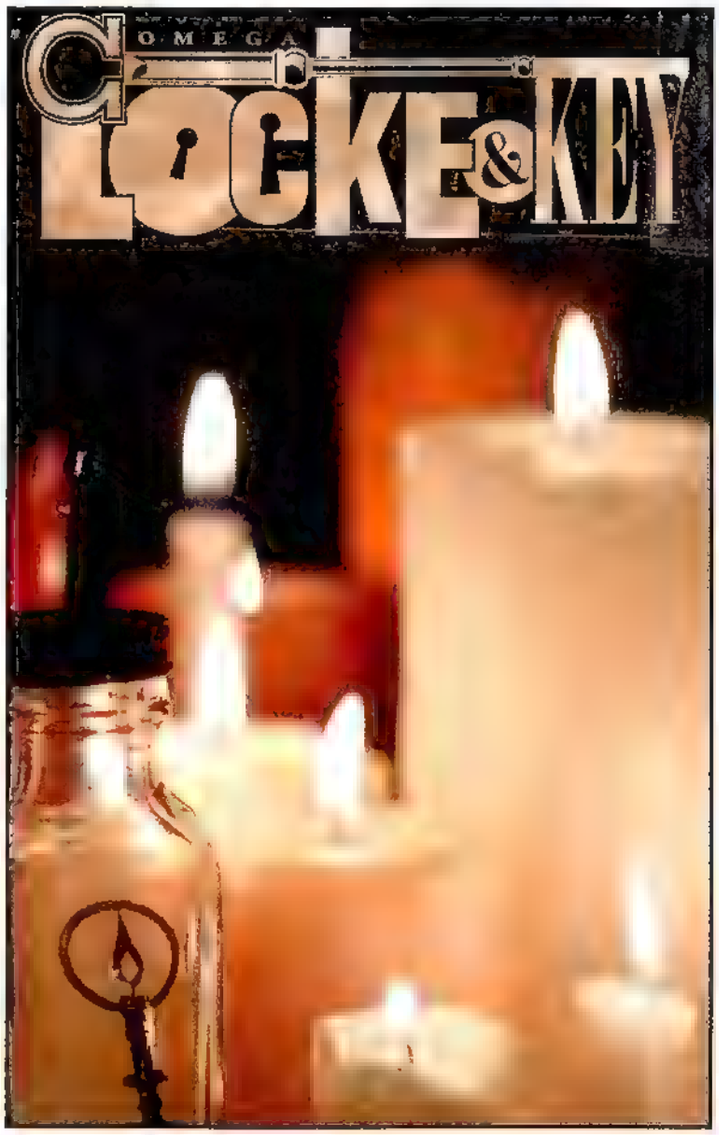
With the new Tarzan movie picking up speed at Warners, Dark Horse will be gearing up Tarzan comics around the film's release, including an oversized book featuring Hal Foster's much loved and admired Tarzan Sunday newspaper pages.

Dark Horse is also seeing a revival of their superhero titles. We've seen *Ghost* revived, *X* is coming out too, and I understand a new character in the same universe, *BlackOut* will be announced soon. Joe Casey is also leading up the charge to reinvent a number of other characters from the Comics Greatest World line in rather off-the-wall fashions, in a manner than he's never really been allowed to do at Marvel or DC. With Francesco Francavilla's *Black Beetle* starting this month, a new Mike Mignola character, Sledgehammer, getting a mini-series, Mike Oeming's sequel to *Victories* in May and a new series from Tim Seeley and Mike Norton, *Occultist*, in the autumn, Dark Horse does seem to be increasing their superhero count.

Killjoys, by Shaun Simon, Gerard Way, Becky Cloonan will finally launch with Free Comic Book Day, while *House of Gold and Bones* by Corey Taylor will coincide with his Stone Sour album release.

AFTER LOCKE AND KEY

Yes, sorry, *Omega* is the end for *Locke & Key* from Joe Hill at IDW. But, he will be creating a new series for the publisher entitled *Wraith*. This new comic will also tie in with his new novel, also for 2013.



That's a trick John Byrne once tried with *Next Men* and his horror novel, *Whipping Boy*, sharing a couple of characters. And John Byrne has plenty to look forward to at IDW. Not just his new space sci-fi series *High Ways* but also his sequel series *Next Men: Finders of Lost Children*, for the summer. And *High Ways* also ties into the sprawling alternate timeline continuity of Next Men, as well. It's like Byrne is building his very own Byrneverse out of everything he touches.

MALLEYWORLD

Bryan Lee O'Malley's *Seconds* will rule your world.

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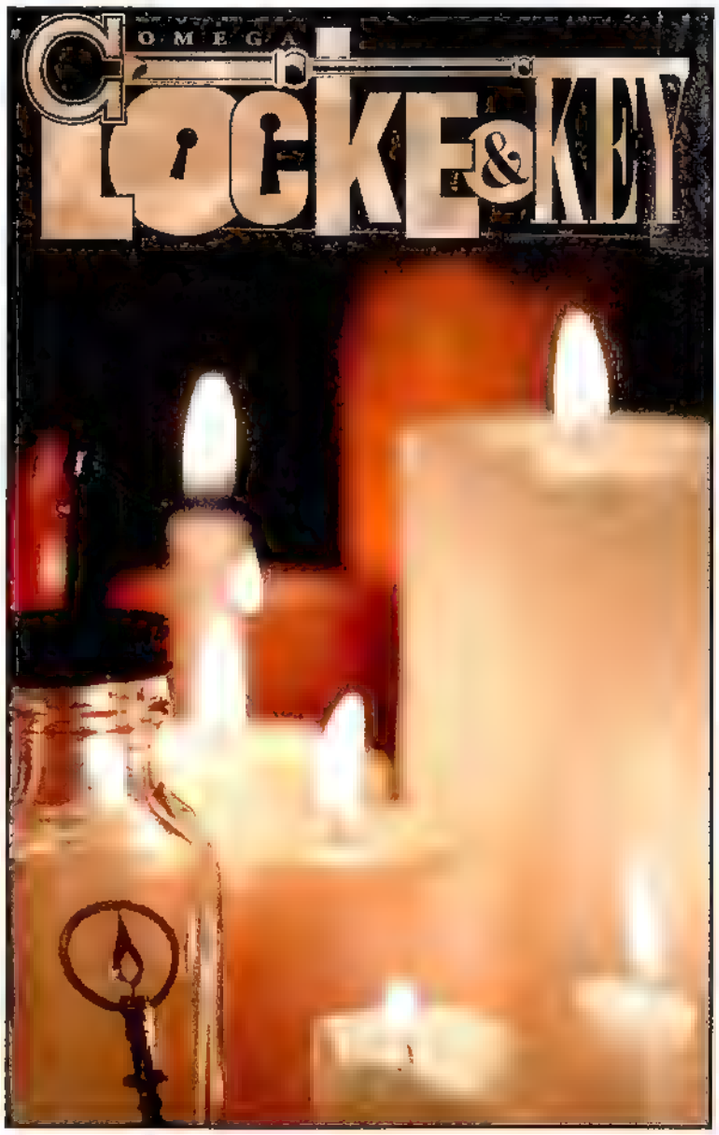

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CHO BITS

Frank Cho's *Savage Wolverine* is coming out now... but what about after that? Well Cho seems dedicated to finishing his *Guns And Dinos* series that was announced, solicited from Image Comics and then just never actually got published beyond a sketchbook or two. French publishers Delcourt have also been waiting on this, so he'd better hurry up.

He's also been working on his art instruction book *How To Draw Women* By Frank Cho which could be insanely popular. He's planning on using a Kickstarter to fund the production. Could he break records?

Especially considering that *Liberty Meadows* is getting close to launching as a CGI TV show, produced by a Spanish studio who are currently working on character models and test footage. Look for a Kickstarter to fund the production of this, as well...

HAVING A COW

Top Cow will relaunch *Aphrodite IX* in May as part of their Free Comic Book Day offerings, written by Matt Hawkins and painted by Stjepan Sejic.

Ron Marz and Nelson Blake are doing an *Artifacts* spin off featuring Magdalena, currently unnamed. Marz and Sejic will also be starting a new series, *Ravine*. And in a break from Top Cow's norm, Hawkins will be teaming with Colleen Doran for a new comic, *Control*.

Colleen Doran drawing a Top Cow comic. Sorry, thought that was worth reiterating.

A LAUGH RIOT

David Hine and Mark Stafford are nearing the completion of their first joint comic work, a 160 page full colour adaptation of *The Man Who Laughs* for SelfMadeHero, which marries the work of Victor Hugo with Batman's *The Joker*.

ANOTHER TATTOO

While we have Vertigo's semi-annual release of the *Millennium Trilogy*, beginning with *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, the French publisher Depuis is also working on their own adaptation by Frédéric Rébéna and crime novelist Guillaume Lebeau. This looks longer, more languid and possibly a little bit funkier, using as it does, more cartoony characters even as the world it portrays is dark, detailed and very real indeed. An adaptation that looks worth breaking out the translation app for.

A COMIC BOOK HERSTORY

Trina Robbins is updating her history of women cartoonist's tome, stretching from 1896 to the present day with two hundred pages full of a history of female comics that has often been ignored. Indeed, the current situation is often being ignored by the rest of the industry, as well. This is the kind of book that can provide a wake up call – once it's found itself onto a coffee table. *Pretty In Ink: Women Cartoonists 1986-2013* should be out in August.

THE LOVE OF A TEEN PSYCHO

This magazine is an All Ages Special, which is why I can't tell you the real title of *The End of the Flipping World* by Chuck Forsman, but you probably get the picture. Forsman won an Ignatz award, but this is his first full length piece of work, telling a familiar story of two young teenagers, facing adulthood and their relationship from each other's perspective.

Expect that James is probably a violent psychopath and those desires keep climbing to the surface. And Alyssa hasn't got a clue. In many ways, this could be *Twilight* for intelligent people.

The COSMIC CODE

Valiant has clearly been looking at the other publishers with envy over their big brash cosmic stories where, of late, the Valiant comics have been pretty much Earth bound. Well, *Planet Death* starting in *X-O Manowar #9* and *Harbinger #0* should change all that.

With Trevor Hairsine, Cary Nord and some decently big name cover artists, this will be Valiant's big swing-for-the-fences cosmic storyline as X-O Manowar destroys a planet. Which, of course, may have implications over what he'd do to our planet...

Valiant pioneered the use of the zero issue in marketing comics back in the nineties and with Harbinger #0, they look like they want to reclaim it. Expect to see it used more as away of showing the core of their universe. And for Bloodshot's past and future as a Harbinger Hunter...

Harbinger Wars will be a standalone, four-issue mini beginning in April that will also have tie-in arcs in *Bloodshot* and *Harbinger*, and will be spinning off new characters and series.

One may be a new version of the fan favourite *Quantum And Woody* comic.

JUDGE NOT, LEST YOU BE JUDGE DREDD

In the UK, *2000AD* seems to be stepping up their attempt to let the world know about a certain Judge. *The Dark Judges* in its pocket-sized format will be the first graphic novel to be part of World Book Night in April. That style will also be expanded to cover Dave Gibbons' early *Rogue Trooper* work in May. Gibbons will also see his *Rogue Trooper* reboot War Machine story reprinted in the U.S. in June. Gibbons wrote this Rogue Trooper reboot, drawn by Will Simpson, as he felt Gerry Finley Day's original strip could have gone in a different direction. The already-infamous image of a male Judge kissing a male citizen, which caused quite a stir when it was posted on Twitter and Facebook last month, will finally appear in 'Closet' in *Prog 1817*, on sale January 30th. Written by Rob Williams, the story will no doubt set tongues wagging...

After Guy Davis' *Judge Dredd* went down so well, 2000AD is grabbing another BPRD artist, James Harren to draw a story in February, *Prog 1819*, again with script by Rob Williams. The two big Dredd stories of 2012 will get quick reprints next year, with the first volume of *Day of Chaos, The Fourth Faction,* being published in the UK in February and the hit Spurrier/Williams/Ewing crossover series *Judge Dredd: The Cold Deck* being collected in its entirety in August.

And talking of the UK, look for a major British-based writer creating and writing an original ongoing series from Boom! beginning in May.

Oh and we get a Sesame Street comic from Ape. Sadly no *Judge Dredd/Sesame Street* crossover is planned. Maybe next year.

THE WRECK-IT RALPH ANIMATION MASTERCLASS

by Brendon Connelly

Director Rich Moore and animation supervisor Renato Dos-Anjos reveal animation tricks and techniques that helped Ralph wreck it

In Disney's Wreck-It Ralph, runaway bad guy Ralph hops between the games in Litwak's arcade, skipping from 8-bit beginnings to 90s-style cartoon Karts, and on to the cutting edge HD of an in-your-face First Person Shooter (FPS). And every step of the way, Ralph had an army of Disney animators chasing behind, racing to keep up with the demands of these different animation styles.

Creating this variety of distinctive video game worlds was a particular challenge because Wreck-It Ralph was animated on computers and, as the film tells us, computer programs are strict things that like rules and regulations. There's a reason Pixar started the CG revolution with a story about characters made of hard, shiny plastic.

But like Ralph himself, the filmmakers weren't satisfied with the old routine. They took all of the know-how they could muster, from director Rich Moore's years of working on The Simpsons and Futurama, Disney's decades of 2D tooning, and the cutting edge of CG rigging, then brought it all together.

I sat down with Moore and animation supervisor Dos-Anjos to draw up this guide to the animation of Wreck-It Ralph. All of the following illustrations were very quick sketches made for me by Dos-Anjos. Any animation class needs some "show" as much as "tell."

DIRECTING AND SUPERVISING

So with Rich Moore 'directing' the animators and Dos-Anjos 'supervising' them, what exactly was the practical difference? Moore explained feedback sessions with the animators, where he could freeze the frame and Dos-Anjos would be able to draw directly onto it using a Cintiq tablet, demonstrating new poses and expressions over the original image. Moore would speak to the animators in the same way as he might the voice cast.

He explained, "I had to remember that animators are actors. They're not acting with their body, they're acting with the figure that they're manipulating. But the language I used with them is still about what the character is feeling or what is motivating them in the scene."

Moore also used the classic animation tool of the exposure sheet to control the timing with frame-perfect precision.

"On The Simpsons and Futurama, most

of my time was spent timing exposure sheets," he explained. "These are pages marked out in a way that represents every frame in the movie and I use them to communicate how I want the character to act. It's done by marking how much time in frames that an action will take. Everything that a character would do from raise their hand to cross the room is noted - down to the frame."

This makes for some mechanical instruction to go alongside the more emotional, motivational feedback, but it's all for the good of the performance.

"I can tell the animators how quickly something can be done, where to put a pose to make something read better, and how to fit the best performance into the time we have."

And while he was working the Cintiq and sketching the overlays, Dos-Anjos would take direction from Moore too.

"Renato would be dealing more with the mechanics - how to move the figure to get what I'm talking about. I would say 'I think it needs to be like this' and then he was able to draw the extremes we'd need and give those poses to the animators."

IN THE 8-BIT WORLD

Ralph comes from the 8-Bit world of Fix-It Felix Jr., the 30-year old platform game in which he's the villain. Though these scenes have all the polish and sophistication of any modern Disney movie, the design and animation harken back to 8-bit simplicity. Look closely and you'll see how rigid everything is, with characters walking in straight lines and their animation skipping in between frames to use only a few key poses. Ralph, though, moves more freely.

Dos-Anjos explains, "He does move a lot more fluidly than the Nicelanders. If you think about a 1980s game they had very limited amounts of data to get these characters up on screen, so you would assume that the background characters would get a smaller share of memory than the main characters. Also, when we meet Ralph, he's been doing this thing for over 20 years and he's just done with it and he doesn't care about the limitations anymore. He's a more sophisticated character - but when he gets upset or angry, he defaults right back to the more simplistic style."

ANGER MANAGEMENT

Dos-Anjos drew me this pose to define angry, wrecking Ralph. He said "This is what defines him as a character in the game."

"Ralph is all about simplicity. He comes from a game where everything was built with sharp angles. He has massive hands because they represent what he is supposed to be and do."

"We used this kind of pose a lot throughout the film. It's not easy to do this in CG so the guys in rigging had to work hard to make a system where these repetitive, matching angles were easier to implement."

"I could easily take this pose into an 8-bit world and draw this with very few pixels and the image would be very similar. If we tilted his arms or hands even a little bit, it would be harder to do in 8-bit."

REJECTED RALPH

But there's more to Ralph than his programming. Dos-Anjos drew this sketch, reproducing a shot that was actually the first ever official image of the character.

"Here's this one guy, isolated from everybody over there in the building, having fun. Nobody wants him close to them. The building is all straight lines, and is exactly straight on to the camera, but Ralph is at an angle, his back is slouched forward, he's deflated and he's off in the corner, in the shadows. This pose is more human, more organic, and without the straight lines, more depressed."

CANDY APPEAL

Every animator I have ever spoken to has talked about 'appeal,' the quality of a design that makes it easy on the eye. I asked Dos-Anjos to explain what the word means to him.

"It's hard to describe appeal, but it's term we use at the studio and talk about a lot. But it's mostly about how something feels. If you see something and it's appealing to you, then you just know it."

"Vanellope is a very appealing character. I love the way she looks. A lot of it is to do with how much she resembles Sarah Silverman and, obviously, Sarah is a beautiful woman. But her expressions are so unique. We used them as a guide to make the character appealing."

"In this appealing version of Vanellope, the angle is very proper for her, it shows off the shapes that are part of her design and you can read the expression on her face. Every single shape lines up with a rhythm and they're not in conflicting places where they're fighting with each other."

"But here's an unappealing drawing. I've turned her away to an ambiguous angle. One eye is poking out of the silhouette, the hair is hiding some of the other. If I was trying to make her look coy I'd go further than this. This falls in the middle, this nebulous place that's not quite here or there."

"Silhouettes are the key, everything has to read well."

SUGAR SQUASH

Vanellope comes from the candy-coloured, not to mention candy-shaped and candy-flavoured, world of Sugar Rush, a Kart racer with animation inspired by anime and the classic Disney Animation version of Alice in Wonderland.

Dos-Anjos explained that this section of the film was particularly tricky.

"Sugar Rush wanted to be a lot more like a classic Disney feature film. It's an amazing accomplishment because CG animation doesn't make that style easy for us, but we're able to break some of the restrictions."

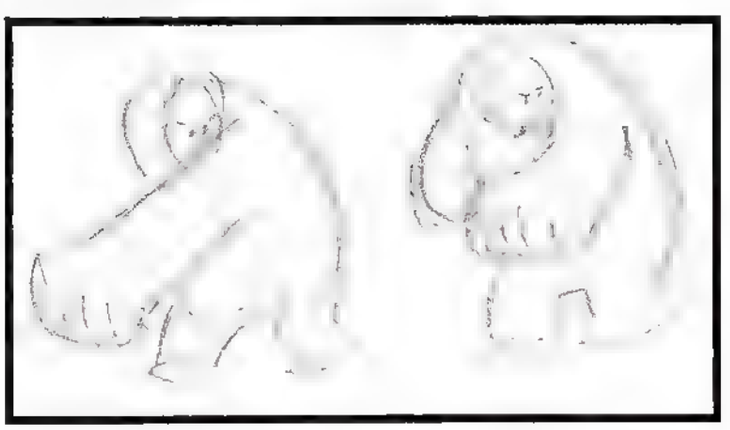
"Mike Gabriel was one of our art directors and his vision for King Candy was that he would look like a cupcake. He evolved into an homage to the Mad Hatter from Alice in Wonderland, and so we looked at that character for inspiration."

"The way he moves is not typical. His animation gets pretty extreme and we wanted him to be very fluid. Everything has a flow, right from one side of his body to the other. Even though his body is very compact, like a cupcake, we gave him a whimsical flow with lots of curves. We used a lot of stretching and squashing."

"This kind of pose isn't super easy to do in CG because computers have a difficult time with things being fluid. We challenged the rigging group to find different ways to rig the character so we could do poses like this."

With a pen and paper, Dos-Anjos can draw you a pose that captures a character in an instant, but working with the computers, it's a long, hard job to get the model posed as close to this desired position as possible. With Wreck-It Ralph, CG goes closer to the flexibility and fluidity of hand drawn animation than ever before, and Dos-Anjos told me they'll be getting closer still in future.

"At the studio, we are working really hard at breaking the boundaries to just be able to create the art we want. It's a process and it's improving on every show. Right now, Ralph is as good as it can be but on the next show we will try to make things a little better."



THE NEW ADVENTURES OF CHARLIE BROWN: THE LEGACY OF CHARLES M. SCHULZ CONTINUES

by Rick Verbanas

Here it is January and the holidays are over. While taking time to reflect on the past year, I can't help but think of the recent nostalgia I felt over the holidays of the past few months. There are traditions which are passed along generation to generation, sharing special moments with family and friends. We all have them. Maybe it was decorating for the holidays, shopping, watching the game, enjoying a big meal around the table... whatever it was, it was an activity that brought generations together.

For me, it was the Charlie Brown holiday specials.

I recall turning on ABC and sitting down on the couch with my parents to watch *It's The Great Pumpkin Charlie Brown*, *A Charlie Brown Thanksgiving*, and my favorite, *A Charlie Brown Christmas* year after year. When I became a teenager, I lost interest in watching those dated-looking cartoons, but it always felt like something was missing each holiday and, secretly, I wanted to watch those "kid shows." Later, as I became a parent myself, I rekindled my love for the Peanuts with my own children, as it is quite often the case when one becomes a parent.

Created by Charles Schulz, *Peanuts* was first published in October 1950. At its height in popularity, the comic strip was published in 75 countries, in 21 different languages. Generations of readers were able to read the new adventures of *Peanuts* for nearly 50 years, until Schultz wrote in a Sunday comic in 2000 announcing he would no longer be publishing new stories:

"Dear Friends, I have been fortunate to draw Charlie Brown and his friends for almost fifty years. It has been the fulfillment of my childhood ambition. Unfortunately, I am no longer able to maintain the schedule demanded by a daily comic strip. My family does not wish Peanuts to be continued by anyone else, therefore I am announcing my retirement. I have been grateful over the years for the loyalty of our editors and the wonderful support and love expressed to me by fans of the comic strip. Charlie Brown, Snoopy, Linus, Lucy... how can I ever forget them..." ***— Charles M. Schulz***

The disappointing news was made even sadder, as Schulz passed away the day before the final strip was published.

Yet, for those 50 years, it was one man and one man only who brought the stories of Charlie Brown, his best friend Linus, his loveable pet dog Snoopy, and many other unforgettable characters to the comic strip.

During that impressive span, Schulz produced 17,897 strips. As Robert Thompson of Syracuse University so aptly put it, Schulz created "arguably the longest story ever told by one human being."

While Peanuts has continued to be published in the comic strips as reprints, it appeared new material would never come. Several animated specials did get produced after 2000 – including *He's a Bully, Charlie Brown* which got tremendous ratings – as these were shows worked on by Schulz himself prior to his death.

With United Media selling its rights to *Peanuts* in 2010 (including its strips and branding) to the newly-formed Peanuts Worldwide, it appeared opportunities for finally publishing new material might be possible. In 2011, BOOM! Studios published *Happiness Is a Warm Blanket, Charlie Brown*, an adaptation of a direct-to-DVD animation. Then, finally, in the beginning of 2012, KaBOOM! (the new name for their all-ages

line of comics) began publishing brand new material in a new mini-series, *Peanuts*.

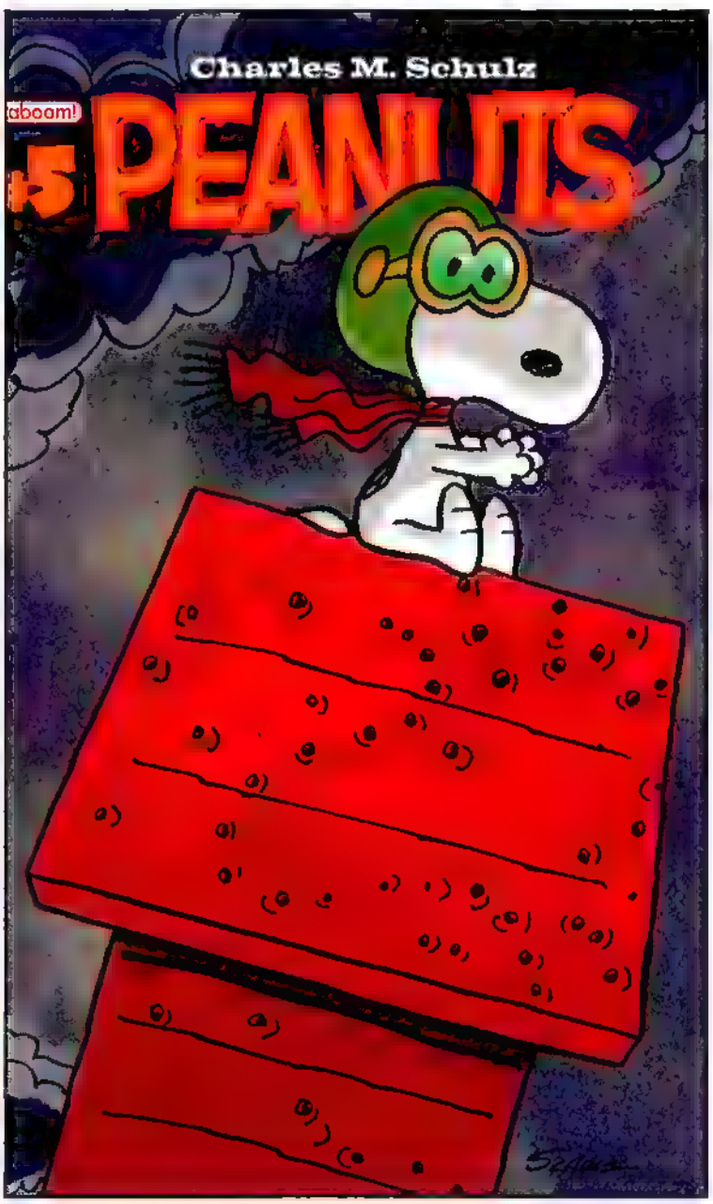
This created some controversy, as it always appeared the Schulz family wanted to make sure no new comic strips were published. However, just as I always cringed when my father called my comic books "the funnies," the team at Charles M. Schulz Creative Associates (20% owners of Peanuts Worldwide) understood the difference between comic strips and comic books.

It was Schulz himself who oversaw the creating of *Peanuts* comic books in the 1950's. At that time, he allowed Dell (with his guidance) to publish new stories in a comic book format, focusing on a longer narrative that was no longer contained to the typical four panels resulting in a stand-alone gag. It was this precedent that made way for new material to be published.

"I don't think you can understate how important it is for KaBOOM! to have one of the great icons in comics as part of our all-ages line," stated Filip Sablik,VP of Publishing and Marketing at BOOM! Studios. "We take incredible pride that the Schulz Estate and Jean Schulz have given us the opportunity to contribute to the Peanuts legacy in a small way."

Schulz fans can be rest-assured the source material will stay true to Schulz's vision, as well as his own stories. With over 17,000 strips and former comic books to draw upon, the classic stories have acted as springboards for new stories.

Created in conjunction with Charles M. Schulz Creative Associates to ensure they are keeping with the legacy of Peanuts, the new comics are predominantly original material building off of and expanding on



Schulz's original strips. However, included as "intermissions" between each story are reprints of classic work by Schulz. "It was important to us to include work by Schulz in each issue to maintain the authenticity and share our love of Peanuts with readers," explained Sablik.

The consumer response has been very strong. In late 2012, they released their second original graphic novel - *It's Tokyo, Charlie Brown*. This month releases *Peanuts #5*, rather than starting over with a new mini-series.

"We had always intended to release *Peanuts* as a series of limited series, two four-issue series per year, along with an original graphic novel," said Sablik. "But the fan and retailer support we've seen has been so great we decided to make the second volume an ongoing series. We'll be publishing four issues monthly, then taking a month off, then back to four issues monthly, and so on."

The demand has been so great, BOOM! published a new *Peanuts* App through iTunes developed by Snapplify. "It's a fantastic way for *Peanuts* fans to enjoy the comics on their phones, tablets, and other mobile devices," explained Sablik. "Fans can read all of the *Peanuts* comics from KaBOOM! along with *Happiness is a Warm Blanket, Charlie Brown* through the app, as well as interact with other *Peanuts* fans through Facebook and YouTube."

Whether it is animated on screen, classic strips in collections, or new material in comic books or on mobile devices... it appears new generations will continue to be able to appreciate the joy that is Peanuts.

Let the tradition continue.

VINTAGE PAPER CHASE

by Mark Seifert & William Christensen

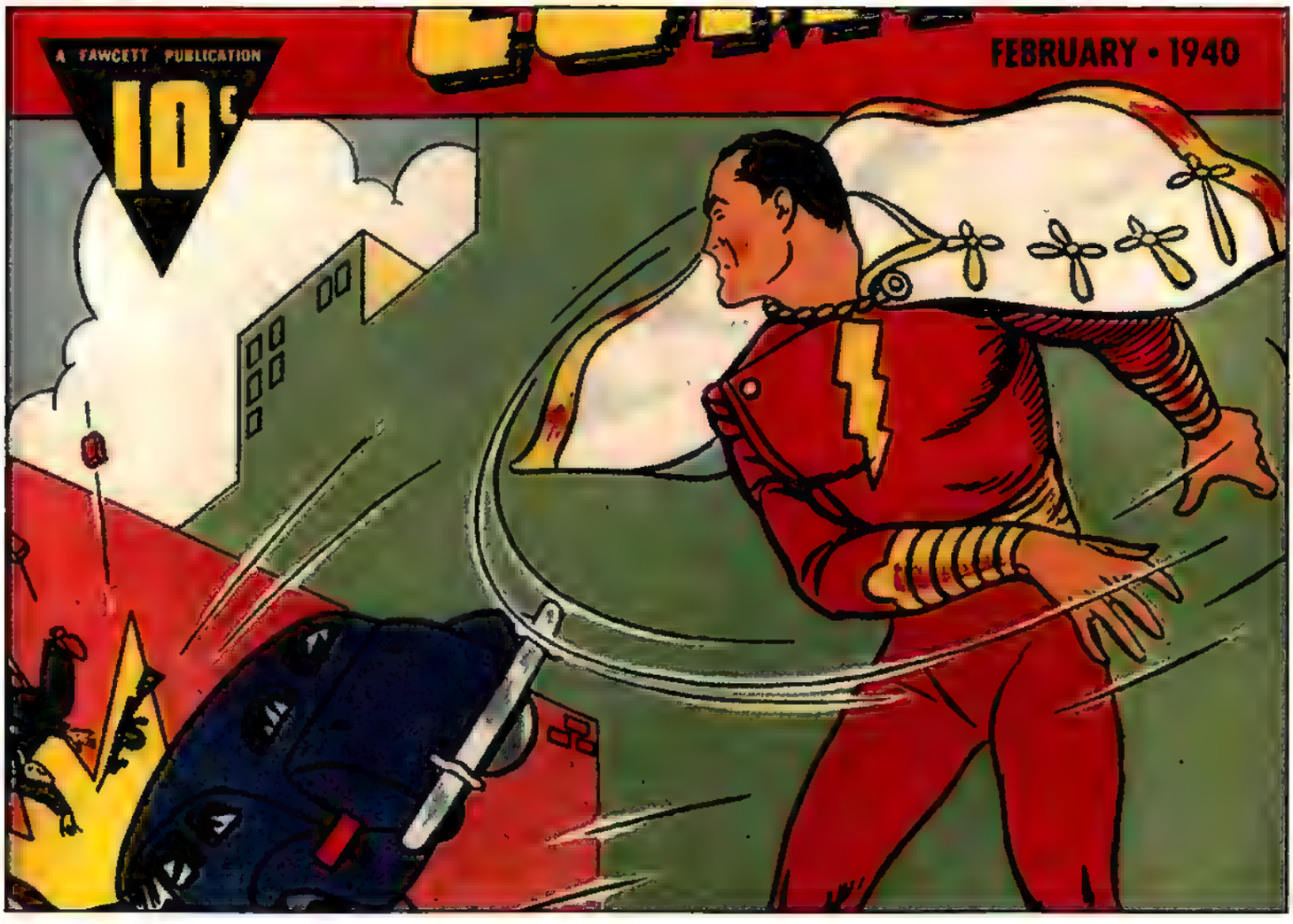
Every year around this time, we get the urge to look at some holiday-themed vintage comic covers and are always amazed to rediscover how much DC Comics liked to commemorate the holidays in the 1930s and 40s. The whimsy sometimes evident in DC's Golden Age titles, even among the superheroes, made holiday covers a good fit. Modern collectors tend to gravitate towards the action and WW II covers of the era, but there are several gems to be found among the light-hearted covers as well.

For example, *More Fun Comics #16* is one of the very earliest DC Christmas covers, but is extremely important to collectors for a different reason -- it's the last installment of a three-part storyline from *More Fun #14-16* which contains what is considered to be a Superman prototype by Superman creators Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, released a year and a half before *Action Comics #1*. These are nearly impossible to find and very undervalued in the current market. The Lost Valley pedigree copy of *More Fun #14* CGC 5.5 went for $4300 earlier this year, and a *More Fun #16* CGC 3.5 sold for $1128 – both of which seem like bargains when you consider what the earliest Superman-related comics go for in the current market.

Golden Age

1930s-era issues of *More Fun Comics* aren't the only instances of the lighter side of the business garnering serious interest from current collectors. Early Archie comics have been heating up in recent times as well. Last year, an *Archie Comics #1* CGC 8.5 sold for $167,300, and just this month, a *Pep Comics #22* – the first appearance of Archie – went for a record $111,000 in CGC 6.5.

And staying on the more whimsical side of the Golden Age, one of the most noteworthy sales of this fall has just closed as we type this. The highest CGC-graded copy of



Whiz Comics #2 (#1) CGC 9.0 has just sold for a record $281,001 at high-end comics & collectables auction house Comic Connect. The February 1940 cover-dated comic contains the first appearance of Captain Marvel by Bill Parker and C.C. Beck. While the first appearances of Superman and Batman have greatly outpaced this book for quite some time, its rarity in unrestored condition – there are just 4 copies at CGC 6.0 or above on the census currently – has reawakened savvy collectors to the desirability of this book. Make no mistake, it's not going to approach *Action Comics #1* or *Detective Comics #27* prices in the future, but the top CGC-graded copy at $281,001 feels like a pretty solid deal.

Fawcetts can be a great option for the budget-minded Golden Age collector as well. For example, a little hunting will find you a solid mid/low-grade unslabbed *Captain Marvel Adventures #18*, the first appearance of Mary Marvel, for under $500 – a Golden Age key for a character who is still pretty popular among current DC Comics fans.

Silver Age

Prior to the release of the Green Lantern movie in 2011, there was a year-long run-up of *Showcase #22* (first Silver Age Green Lantern, first Hal Jordan) prices in all grades. Now collectors are wondering if the same thing will happen with *The Brave and the Bold #28* (first Justice League). The CGC 8.0 Savannah pedigree copy recently sold for $17,000, and that's already a substantial jump over the $11,054 that the same copy went for early last year.

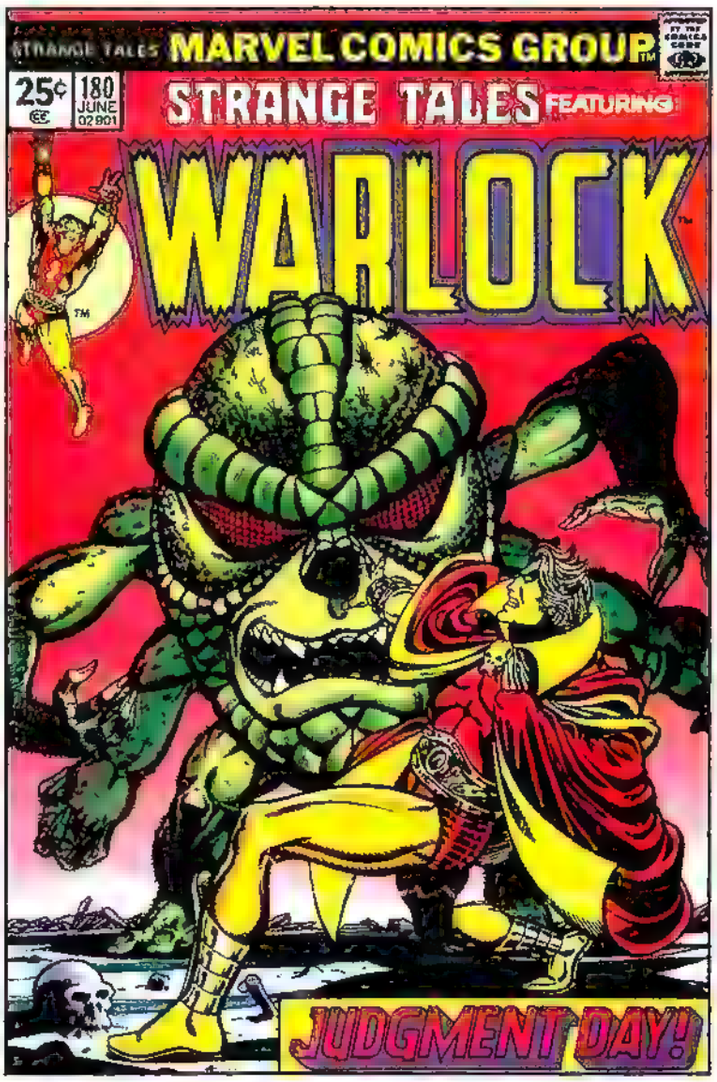
This has always been one of my favorite DC keys for low grade collectors as well. You can probably find an unslabbed VG-range copy from a reputable dealer for $1200 or under, and have a copy of one of the most important DC Silver Age keys in your collection before prices start to rise throughout 2013.

Bronze Age

Movie mania is currently a major market force in the Bronze Age as well. As we mentioned last month, there are several Guardians of the Galaxy-related keys emerging as hot prospects during the run-up to the film's 2014 release. Here's a list of some to watch out for:

MARVEL COMICS GROUP
THE INCREDIBLE HULK
WHAT?! HULK HAS TO SHARE HIS 20TH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE WITH FUNY TALKING ANIMAL?
YOU GOT IT, JADE JAWS! MOVE OVER AND MAKE WAY FOR...
ROCKET RACCOON!

- ***Incredible Hulk #271*** - First comic-sized appearance and first cover appearance of Rocket Raccoon. The white cover makes this one tricky in high grade. $50 in raw high grade.
- ***Marvel Preview #4*** - First appearance of Star-Lord. Marvel Preview was a magazine, which is both a plus and minus to collectors. On the minus side, some collectors don't like the magazine format as a general rule, on the plus side, they are generally harder to get and tougher in high grade. Currently running in the $125-150 range in raw high grade.
- ***Marvel Preview #7*** - First Rocket Raccoon. Also super-tough in high grade,and surprisingly rare. $150-175 range in raw high grade currently.



- ***Strange Tales #180*** - First Gamora. $60-85 in raw high grade.
- ***Marvel Presents #3*** - A great cover and the start of the first series for the original Guardians of the Galaxy. Raw high grades can bring $40-60 currently.

The beauty of all of these is that it's still very possible to dig up copies at local shops and cons at good prices, and there are still lots of room for the market to run with them before the August 2014 release date of the film.

The Future Of Vintage Paper

There's much more to talk about in Vintage Paper both here and online, and we'd like your help. Contact us at vintagepaper@bleedingcool.com if you'd like to contribute market data.

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HOT COMICS
by Rich Johnston

SPIDER DOLLAR AND CENTS

Amazing Spider-Man #600 is the beginning of where all this Doctor Octopus/ Superior Spider-Man stuff we spent the day after Christmas reading kicked off. You've been able to buy it for $4-5 easily enough. It's juuuuuuust possible that may not be the case anymore.

And, yes, despite the huge numbers ordered for *Amazing Spider-Man #700*, the corresponding numbers for *Avenging Spider-Man #15.1*, the second part of the story just weren't enough. Did you get a copy? Might want to see what you can flip it for on eBay...

Madame Web's double page spread vision in *Amazing Spider-Man #695* may also be something to keep an eye on...

SUPERF*CKING

That heady mix of mass media phenomenon backed up by a tiny first print appearance gives us James Kolchalka's *Superf*ckers*. Finding copies of this means one of two things; paying over the odds, or lucking across it in a fifty-cent box somewhere. While popular amongst many indie comic fans when published, that still means a print run smaller than *Walking Dead #1*. And, also, those indie snobs actually read the comics rather than instantly preserving them in amber like a sane speculator. What were they thinking?

BEFORE INVINCIBLE

With *Invincible* hitting #100, there's a lot of fuss about the early issues of that book and appearances of the character – *Savage Dragon #102, Noble Causes #3, Masters Of The Universe #1, Tech Jacket #1* and the like.

But if you really want a first appearance, how much would you pay for the November 2002 *Previews* catalogue, which features him on the cover, shows the first splash page and has an article, amid a number of new Image comic books that everyone has forgotten about now...

I mean, seriously, how many of those can you find in mint condition?

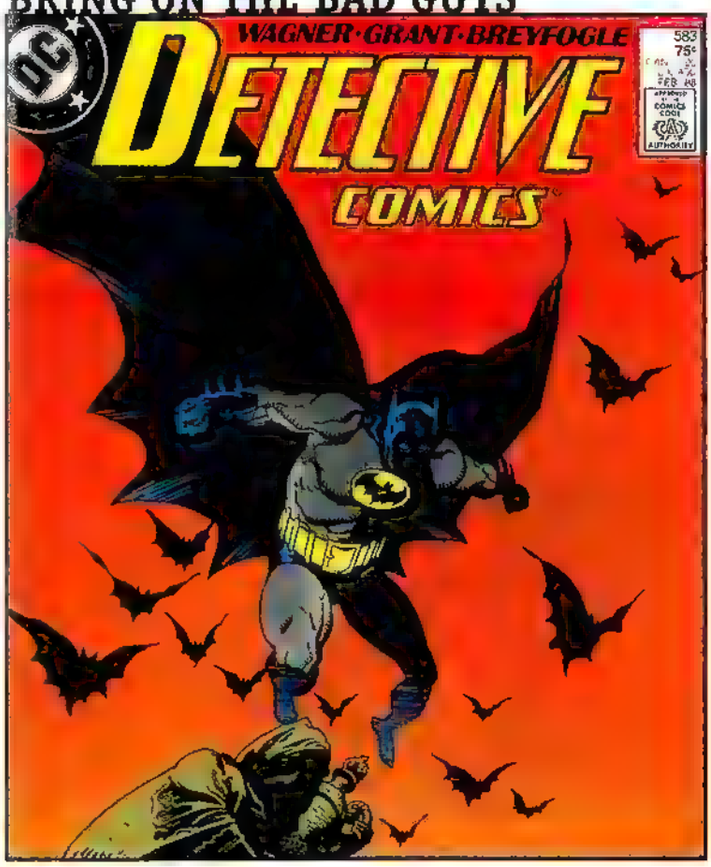
A FIRST FROM IMAGE

The biggest generator of speculator hits right now has to be Image Comics, with around one-in-three of their titles becoming speculator hits. Whether it's a big name or an unknown, retailers still don't seem to be able to order enough. Now with more books from Matt Fraction, Jonathan Hickman, Kelly Sue DeConnick, Kieron Gillen and Howard Chaykin, there are so many money-making opportunities just sitting there...

THOSE DAMN KIDS

The other guaranteed hit maker is the comic based on the kid show that not enough retailers are aware of. *Ratchet & Clank, Adventure Time, Bravest Warriors, My Little Pony* – what's next? Well, the *NFL Rush Zone* has to be a favourite considering the publisher, Action Labs, is comparatively so small...

BRING ON THE BAD GUYS



With all the villains being reintroduced into the DC Universe later this year, that's a lot of first appearances that could be under the microscope. The Riddler's first appearance probably won't be affected, but what about the Ventriloquist? The first appearance was *Detective Comics #583* back in 1988. I'd buy that for... well, currently on eBay for $2. Will it be for long?

Of course, even as we are in the last throes of *Death Of The Family*, the look of the new Joker, now more influenced by Heath Ledger than ever before, is in the DC New 52 *Detective Comics #1*, that final page with the ripped-away face. Currently selling from $10 to $15, could this be a new *New Mutants #98?*

DIRTBAGGED AND BOARDED

Self-publicity time here. Back in the early nineties, I self published my own comics. One called *Dirtbag* and one called *X-Flies*. They weren't exactly great but on *Dirtbag* I got a bunch of comics creators at conventions to help me with "jam" covers. And, now, twenty years later, they have been rediscovered and issue 2 with Mark Buckingham's Miracleman and issue 3 with Neil Gaiman's Sandmouse, and people are paying silly money for them, $30 here, $40 there. If only I hadn't pulped all those thousands of copies...

PRICE GUIDE

for Collectors and Sellers

Welcome to the Bleeding Cool Price Guide. This is a snippet of the kind of prices comics are selling for on the open market. Each issue we try for a theme, and this time it's All Ages Comics! We look at a number of titles, from *Adventure Time* to *The Simpsons* that are rocking the market and report on the sale prices they have achieved on eBay. Values rise and fall, of course, and change around the country. A price listed here, is no guarantee you'll be able to sell yours for that price, but it might give you an idea of what someone, somewhere, is willing to pay! Retailers who would like to become part of an advisory board for the Price Guide feature should contact Rick Verbanas via email: *rickverbanas@bleedingcool.com*

Adventure Time

Free Comic Book Day	$6
1A	$50
1B	$30
1C	$38
1D	$60
1E	$80
1 Sketch Cover	$70
1 Chapel Hill	$80
1 Annapolis	$103
1 SDCC	$40
1 ECC	$25
1 (2nd Print)	$20
1 (3rd Print)	$10
2A	$10
2B	$8
2C	$30
2D	$38
2 (2nd Print)	$6
3A	$10
3B	$13
3C	$25
3D	$35
4A	$8
4B	$8
4C	$25
4D	$30
4 Casablanca	$18
4 Granite Comic Con	$15
5A	$7
5B	$7
5C	$15
5D	$25
5 Heroes Con	$60
Mini Comic	$40
6A	$7
6B	$7
6C	$15
6D	$20
7A	$6
7B	$7
7C	$10
7D	$15
8A	$6
8B	$6
8C	$8
8D	$20
9A	$4
9B	$4
9C	$10
9D	$18
9 NC Comic Con	$18
10A	$4
10B	$4
10C	$19
10 Cards, Comics & Coll.	$10

Adventure Time: Marcelene and the Scream Queens

1A	$7.50
1B	$13
1C	$15
1D	$14
1E	$35
1 (2nd Print)	$13
1 Baltimore	$38
1 Awesome Virgin	$120
1 Awesome	$10
1 Sketch	$70
1 SDCC	$50
1 Diamond SDCC	$10
1 Fry Song	$15
1 Shades of Red (w/ Sketch)	$95
1 Annapolis	$35
1 Web Exclusive	$15
2A	$8
2B	$10
2C	$17
2D	$18
2 Web Exclusive	$15
3A	$13
3B	$8
3C	$15
3D	$18
3 Web Exclusive	$15
4A	$5
4B	$6
4C	$7
4D	$18
4 Web Exclusive	$15
5A	$4
5B	$4
5C	$9
5D	$20
5 Web Exclusive	$15

Bravest Warriors

1A	$6
1B	$6
1C	$8
1D	$6
1E	$21
1F	$30

My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic

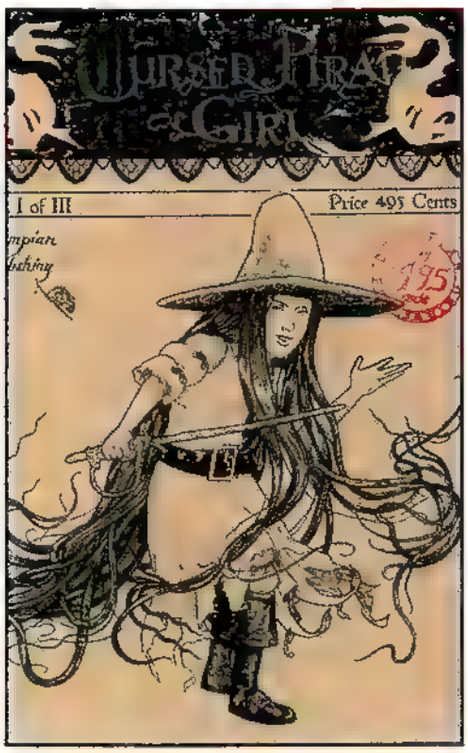
1A	$8
1B	$8
1C	$8
1D	$8
1E	$8
1F	$8
1 Subscription	$8
1 Retailer Incentive	$12
1 Boxset	$30
1 Larry & Jetpack	$90
1 Larry	$30
1 Midtown	$28
1 Third Eye	$15
1 Jetpack	$20
1 Dynamic Forces	$20
1 Double Midnight	$15
1 DetroitComicBookStores	$25
1 Lonestar	$15
1 Hastings	$10
1 Ghost Variant	$20

Life With Archie #16

16 Reg	$40
16 SDCC	$30

Kevin Keller

1	$20
Veronica 202	$6



Cursed Pirate Girl

1	$150
2	$120
3	$30

Mouse Guard

1 ComiXpress Edition	$250
1 Archaia	$30
Fall 1152	$30
FCBD 2011	$9
FCBD 2012	$7

Strawberry Shortcake

Marvel

1	$9
2	$13
3	$5
4	$13
5	$8

Ape

1	$3
2	$5
3	$5

Spongebob Squarepants

1	$10
2	$8
3	$6
4	$6
5	$7
6	$10
7	$11
8	$4

Muppet Sherlock Holmes

GN	$46
1	$9
2	$20

Muppet Show

0	$12
1 Sketch	$8

Muppet Peter Pan

1	$3
2	$10

Fraggle Rock

Marvel

1	$3
2	$3
3	$4
4	$3
5	$3
6	$2
7	$7
8	$9

Ratchet And Clank

1	$4
2	$10
3	$3
4	$5
5	$3
6	$6

Simpsons Comics

1	$17
2	$10
3	$10
4	$10
5	$8
7	$6
10	$6
11	$5
14	$6
17	$15
18	$14
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50	$11
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53	$5
56	$6
57	$8
58	$8
59	$5
60	$5
69	$8
70	$6
71	$7
75	$6
80	$4
85	$7
88	$5
90	$5
92	$6
95	$5
96	$4
98	$7
102	$5
103	$5
110	$6
115	$5
116	$8
117	$5
119	$5
150	$4
155	$7

Simpsons: Best Superhero Stories Ever SDCC 2011

1	$55

Simpsons: Go For The Gold

1	$30

Simpsons Illustrated

Winter 92	$14

Simpsons Treasure Trove

1	$8

Simpsons Treehouse Of Horror

1	$13
4	$7
5	$10
7	$10
8	$9
9	$9
10	$11
11	$15
12	$7
13	$10
14	$15
15	$16
16	$5
17	$10
18	$5

Bartman

1	$20
2	$4
3	$4
4	$4
5	$8

Bart Simpson Comics

1	$5
2	$7
3	$7
11	$4
13	$8
17	$7
23	$5
24	$4
27	$4
33	$6
34	$4
38	$4
39	$4
41	$9
42	$4
44	$9
47	$4
48	$4
70	$4

Itchy And Scratchy Holiday

1	$10

Krusty The Klown

1	$8
2	$7
3	$7

Lisa Simpson

1	$7

Radioactive Man

1	$11
2	$7

Ralph Wiggum

1	$7
1 Newsstand	$25

Futurama/Simpsons Crossover

1	$11
2	$8

Futurama/Simpsons Pt 2

1	$9
2	$8

Futurama

1	$56
2	$27
3	$15
4	$15
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10	$10
11	$10
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44	$7
45	$6
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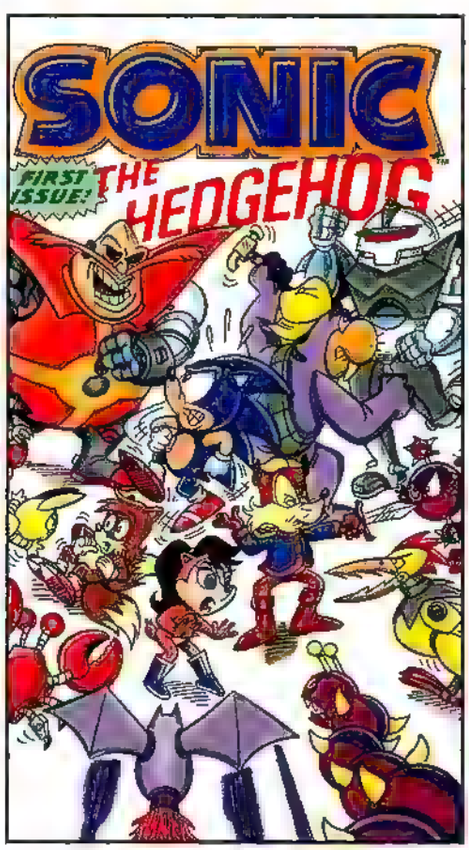
54	$4
59	$7
60	$5
61	$5
1 SDCC	$124
Delivery Boy Man 1 SDCC	$20



Sonic the Hedgehog

1 Ongoing	$20

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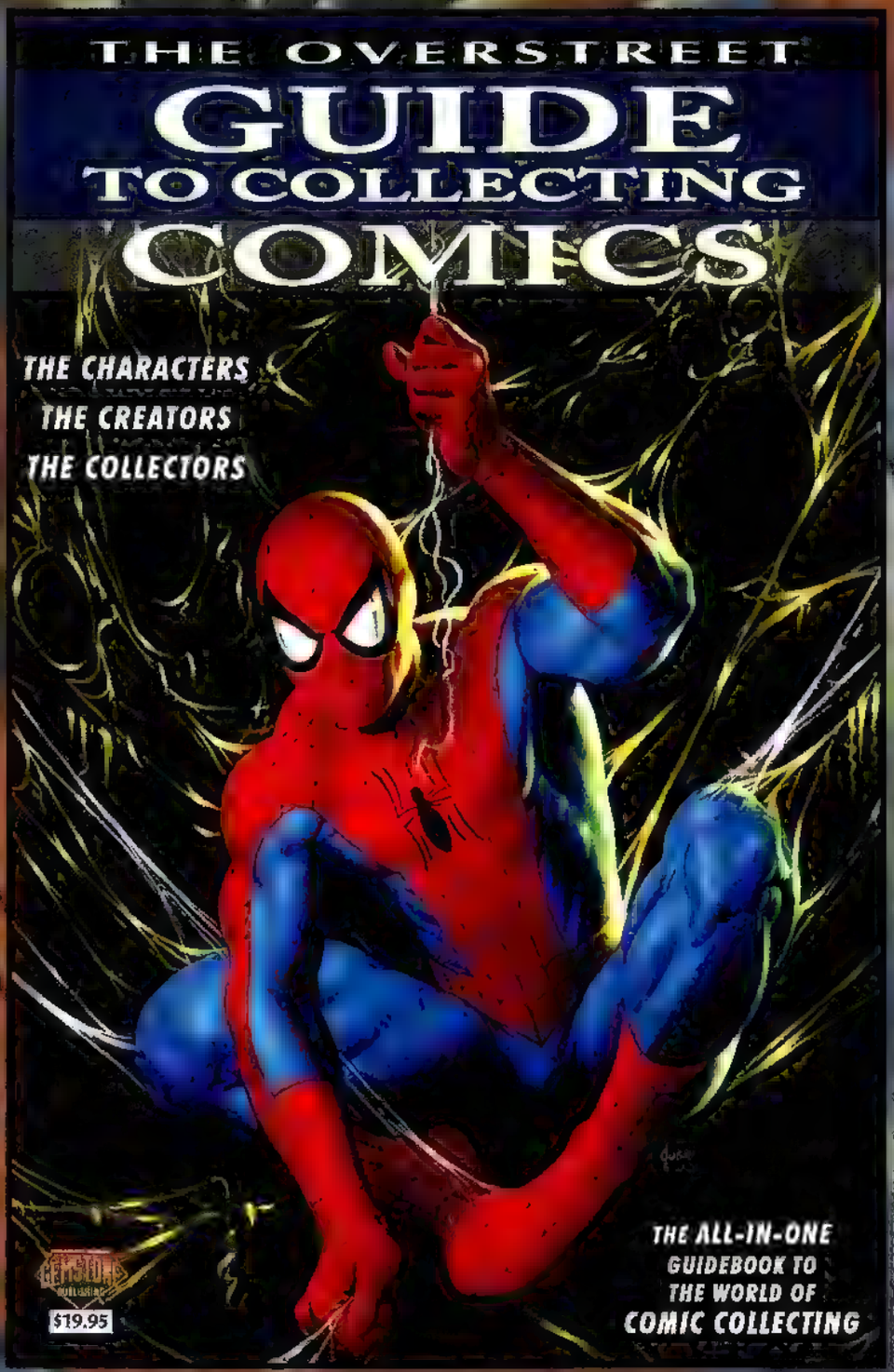

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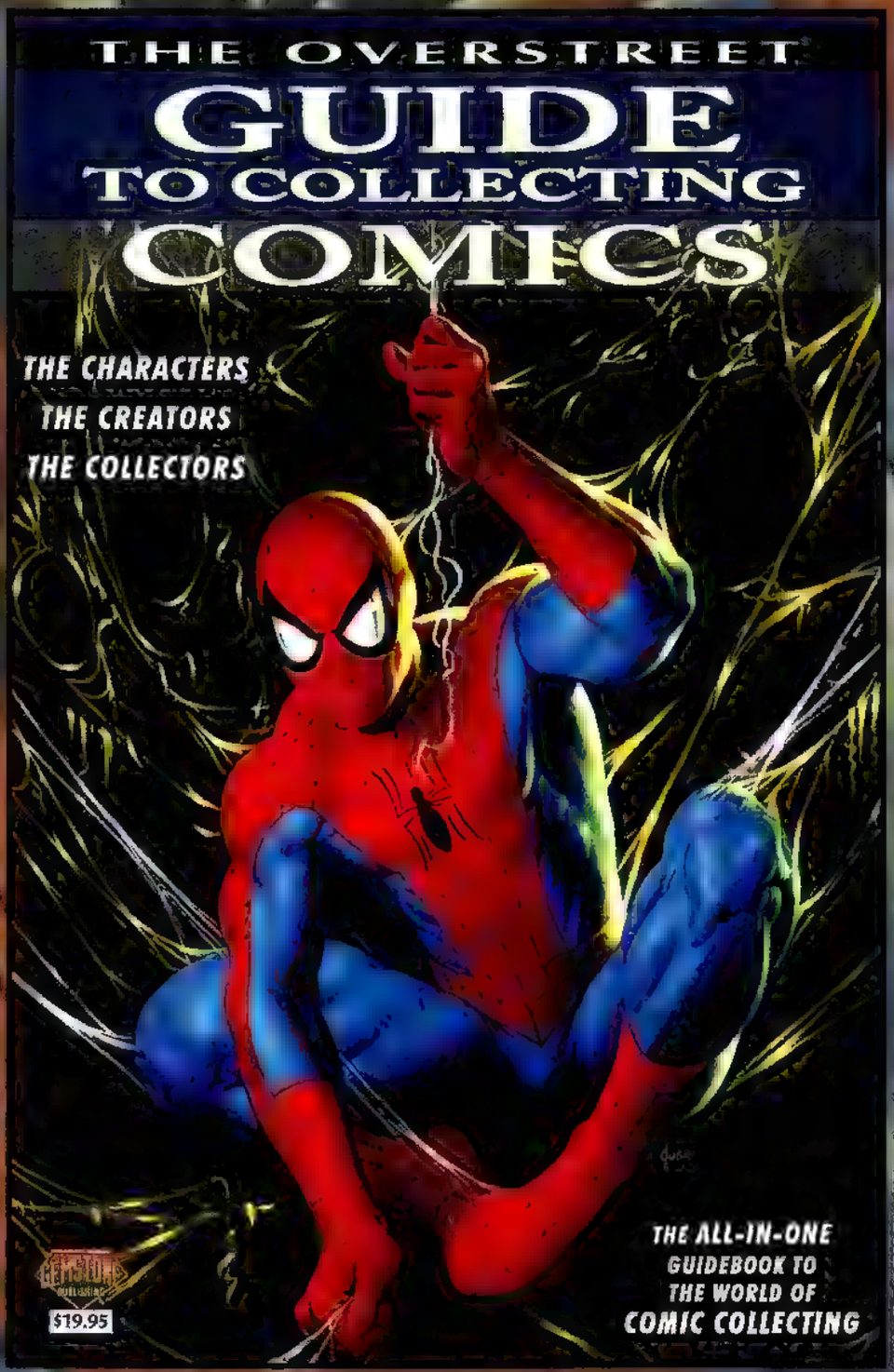

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- Drawn to Comics: Glendale, AZ
- Jesse James Comics & Collectibles: Glendale, AZ
- Metropolis Comics: Bellflower, CA
- Fantastic Comics: Berkley, CA
- Comics Ink: Culver City, CA
- *Super Heroes In Training: Escondido, CA*
- Treasure Island Comics: Fremont, CA
- Heroes Comics & Cards: Fresno, CA
- I.E. Comics and Games: Hemet, CA
- The Comic Bug: Manhattan Beach, CA
- Bonanza Books & Comics: Modesto, CA
- Yesteryear Comics: San Diego, CA
- D J's Universal Comics: Studio City, CA
- Mile High Comics: Denver, CO
- Rogue Comics: Bridgeport, CT
- The Comics Club Inc.: Brandon, FL
- Macs Comics & Collectibles: Miami, FL
- A Comic Shop: Winter Park, FL
- Mayhem Collectibles: Des Moines, IA
- Dreamland Comics IV: Bartlett, IL
- Alley Cat Comics: Chicago, IL
- Graham Crackers: Chicago, IL
- Amazing Fantasy Comic Shop: Frankfort, IL
- Beyond Tomorrow: Palatine, IL
- *Discount Comic Book Service: Fort Wayne, IN*
- Creative Comics: Griffith, IN
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- Dee Puppy Comics: Indianapolis, IN
- Prairie Dog Comics: Wichita, KS
- Comic Vault: Radcliff, KY
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- Newbury Comics: Brighton, MA
- New England Comics: Brockton, MA
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- Bob's Hobbies & Collectibles: North Hampton, MA
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- Twin City Comics: Columbia Height, MN
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- Rock Bottom Books: Columbia, MO
- Newcastle Comics & Games: Maryland Hgts, MO
- Fantasy Shop: St Charles, MO
- Ultimate Comics: Durham, NC
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- A & S Comics: North Bergen, NJ
- Zapp Comics & Cards: Wayne, NJ
- Astro-Zombies: Albuquerque, NM
- Cheese Boy Comics: Las Vegas, NV
- Earthworld Comics: Albany, NY
- Blu Planet Comics & Games: Massapequa, NY
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- All Heroes Comics: Rochester, NY
- Rockin' Rooster: Cincinnati, OH
- Cleveland Comics: Cleveland, OH
- Rupps Comics: Fremont, OH
- Things From Another World: Milwaukie, OR
- TM Cards: Allentown, PA
- Bell's Comics & Trading Cards: Grove City, PA
- New Dimension Comics: McMurray, PA
- America's Most Wanted Collectibles: Williamsport, PA
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- Apocalypse Comics: N Myrtle Beach, SC
- Lone Star: Arlington, TX
- Austin Books & Sports Cards: Austin, TX
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- Bankstons: Waco, TX
- Night Flight Comics: Salt Lake, UT
- Atlas Comics: Charlottesville, VA
- Borderless: Chesapeake, VA
- Untamed Worlds: Lynchburg, VA
- Four Color Fantasies: Winchester, VA
- Painted Visions Comics & Cards: Woodbridge, VA
- Alter Ego Comics: Bellevue, WA
- The Comic Stop: Everett, WA
- Powers Comics & Collectibles: Green Bay, WI
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- Legends: Victoria, BC
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- Gosh! The London Comic Shop: Soho, London
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- Orbital Comics Ltd: London WC2H 7JA
- Paradox Comics 'N Stuff: Poole, Dorset Hh15 1AB
- Whatever Comics: Canterbury, Kent CT1 2AT
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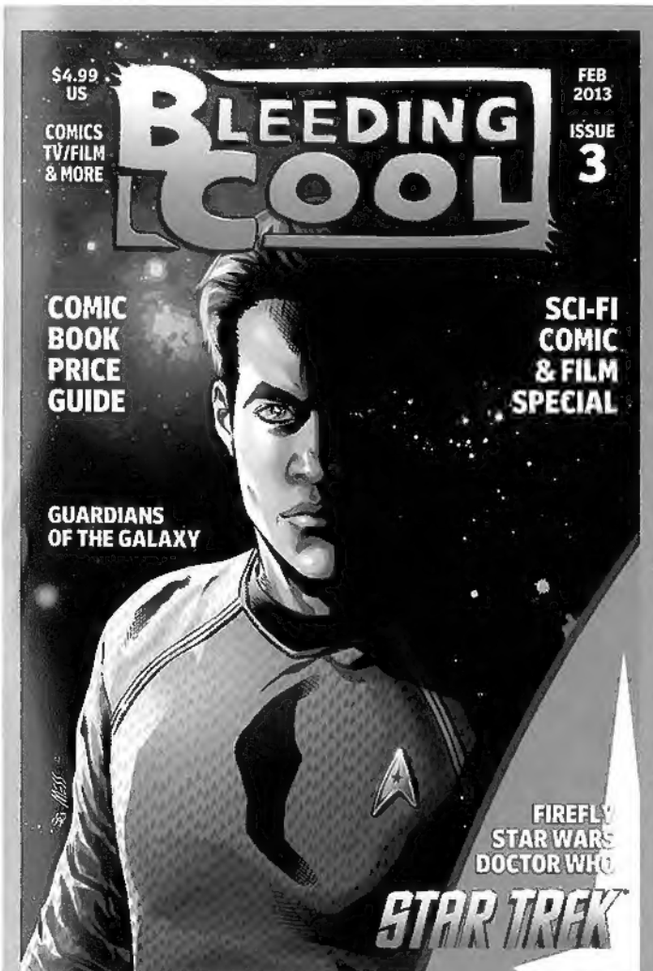

Next Issue

Space...the final frontier...these are the adventures of the starship BCM! Sci-Fi Month invades Bleeding Cool! With features on Doctor Who, Star Wars, Star Trek, Firefly, and all things from the world of sci-fi, this issue is set to deliver all the insights on the comics heating up the stratosphere this winter! We examine Marvel's upcoming Guardians of the Galaxy feature, find out what sci-fi comics are burning off the racks, and decipher the Star Wars comic universe. This issue of Bleeding Cool Magazine gives you what you can't get on the web – unique and relevant editorial, the hottest creators, the biggest events, and Rich Johnston's critical analysis of the things that drive our hobby. Delivering over 100 pages per issue on a bi-monthly release schedule, you are not going to want to miss the behind-the-scenes scoops, hot book price guide, and hot book speculation Over a million monthly BleedingCool.com visitors can't be wrong! Delivering the best of comics and film with the right mix of innovation, snark, and spell-checking, it's Bleeding Cool!

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